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(54) **TECHNOLOGIES FOR MANAGING COMPROMISED SENSORS IN VIRTUALIZED ENVIRONMENTS**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Systems, methods, and computer-readable media for managing compromised sensors in multi-tiered virtualized environments. In some embodiments, a system can receive, from a first capturing agent deployed in a virtualization layer of a first device, data reports generated based on traffic captured by the first capturing agent. The system can also receive, from a second capturing agent deployed in a hardware layer of a second device, data reports generated based on traffic captured by the second capturing agent. Based on the data reports, the system can determine characteristics of the traffic captured by the first capturing agent and the second
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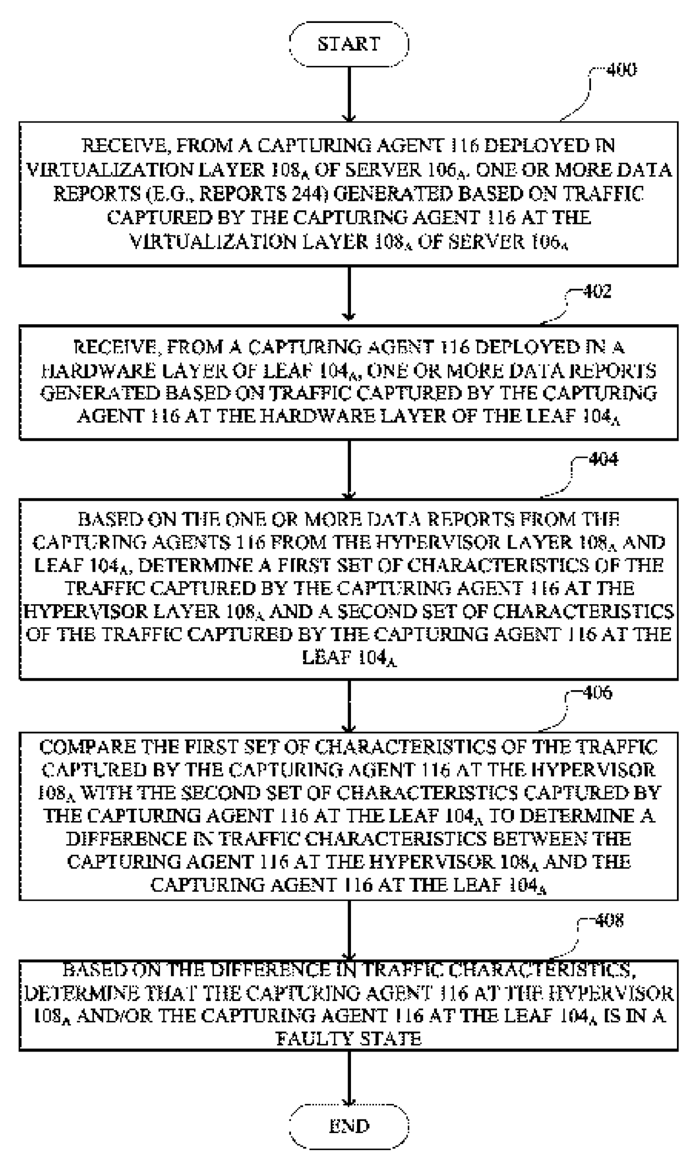

capturing agent. The system can then compare the characteristics to determine a multi-layer difference in traffic characteristics. Based on the multi-layer difference in traffic characteristics, the system can determine that the first capturing agent or the second capturing agent is in a faulty state.

19 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets

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H04L 43/10	(2022.01)
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H04L 43/04	(2022.01)
H04W 84/18	(2009.01)
H04L 67/10	(2022.01)
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See application file for complete search history.

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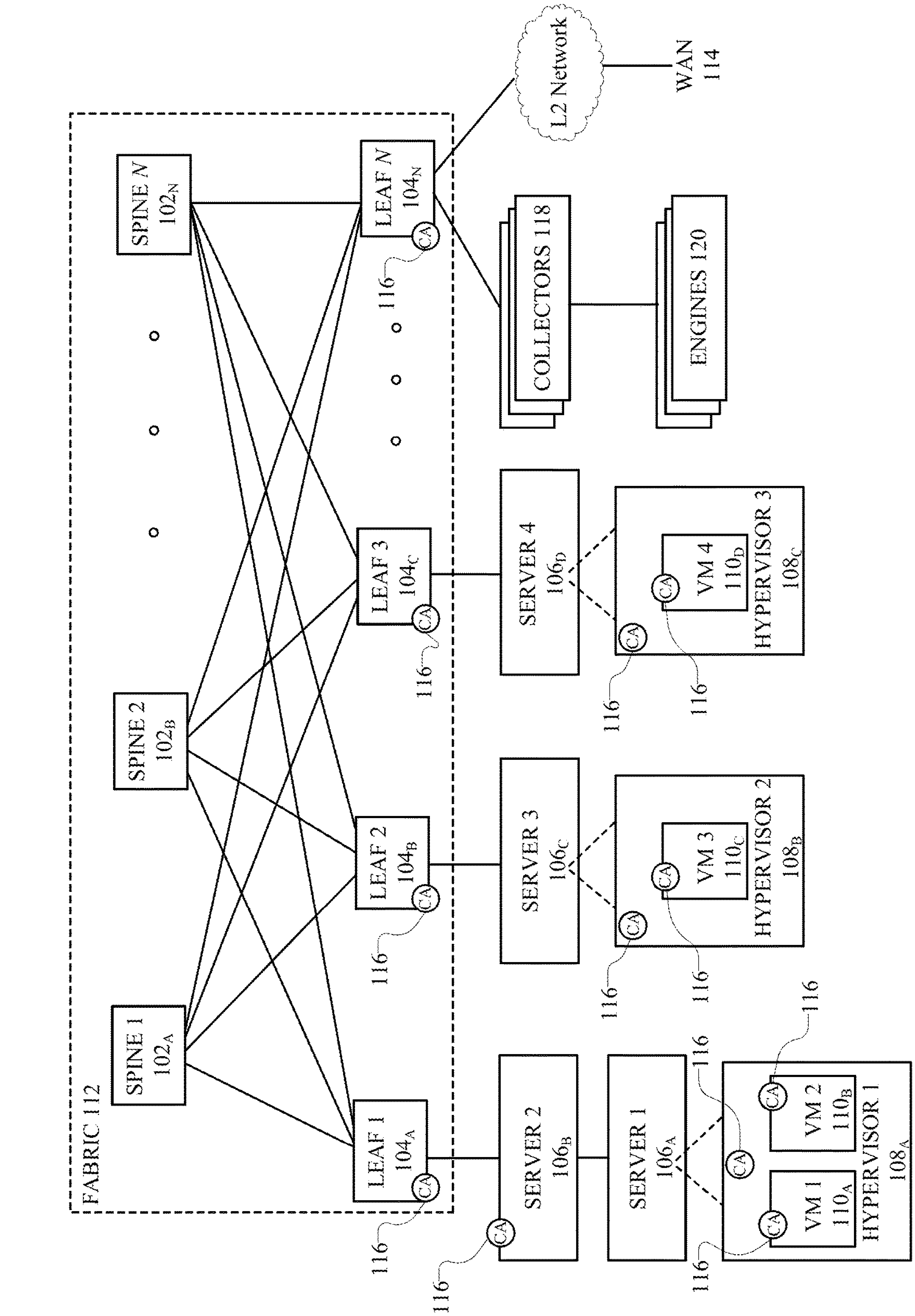
FIG. 1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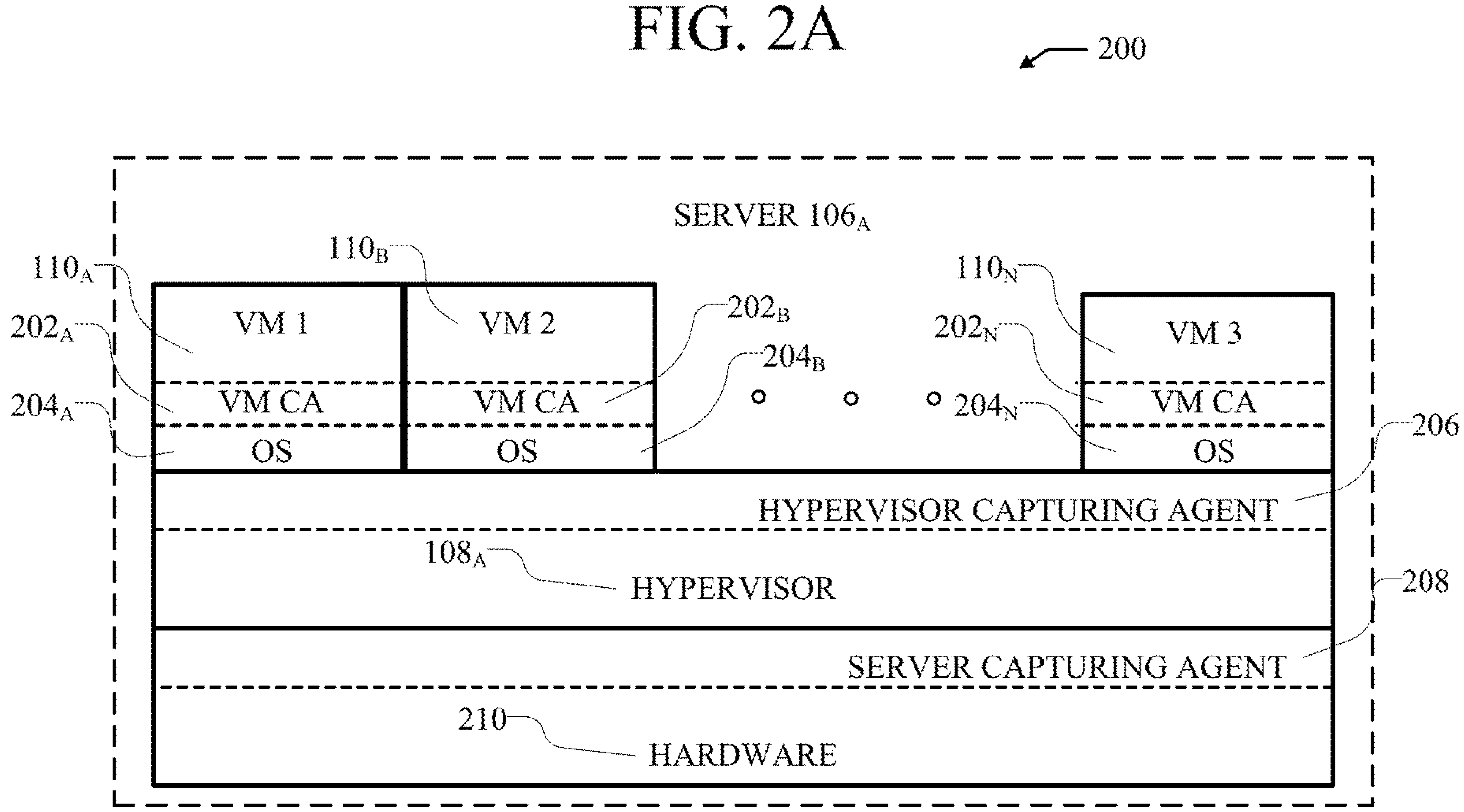
FABRIC 112
SPINE 1 102A
SPINE 2 102B
SPINE N 102N
LEAF 1 104A
LEAF 2 104B
LEAF 3 104C
LEAF N 104N
CA
116
L2 Network
WAN 114
COLLECTORS 118
ENGINES 120
SERVER 1 106A
SERVER 2 106B
SERVER 3 106C
SERVER 4 106D
HYPERVISOR 1 108A
HYPERVISOR 2 108B
HYPERVISOR 3 108C
VM 1 110A
VM 2 110B
VM 3 110C
VM 4 110D

FIG. 2A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SERVER 106A
110A
110B
110N
VM 1
VM 2
VM 3
202A
202B
202N
204A
204B
204N
VM CA
VM CA
VM CA
OS
OS
OS
206
HYPERVISOR CAPTURING AGENT
108A
HYPERVISOR
208
SERVER CAPTURING AGENT
210
HARDWARE

FIG. 2B

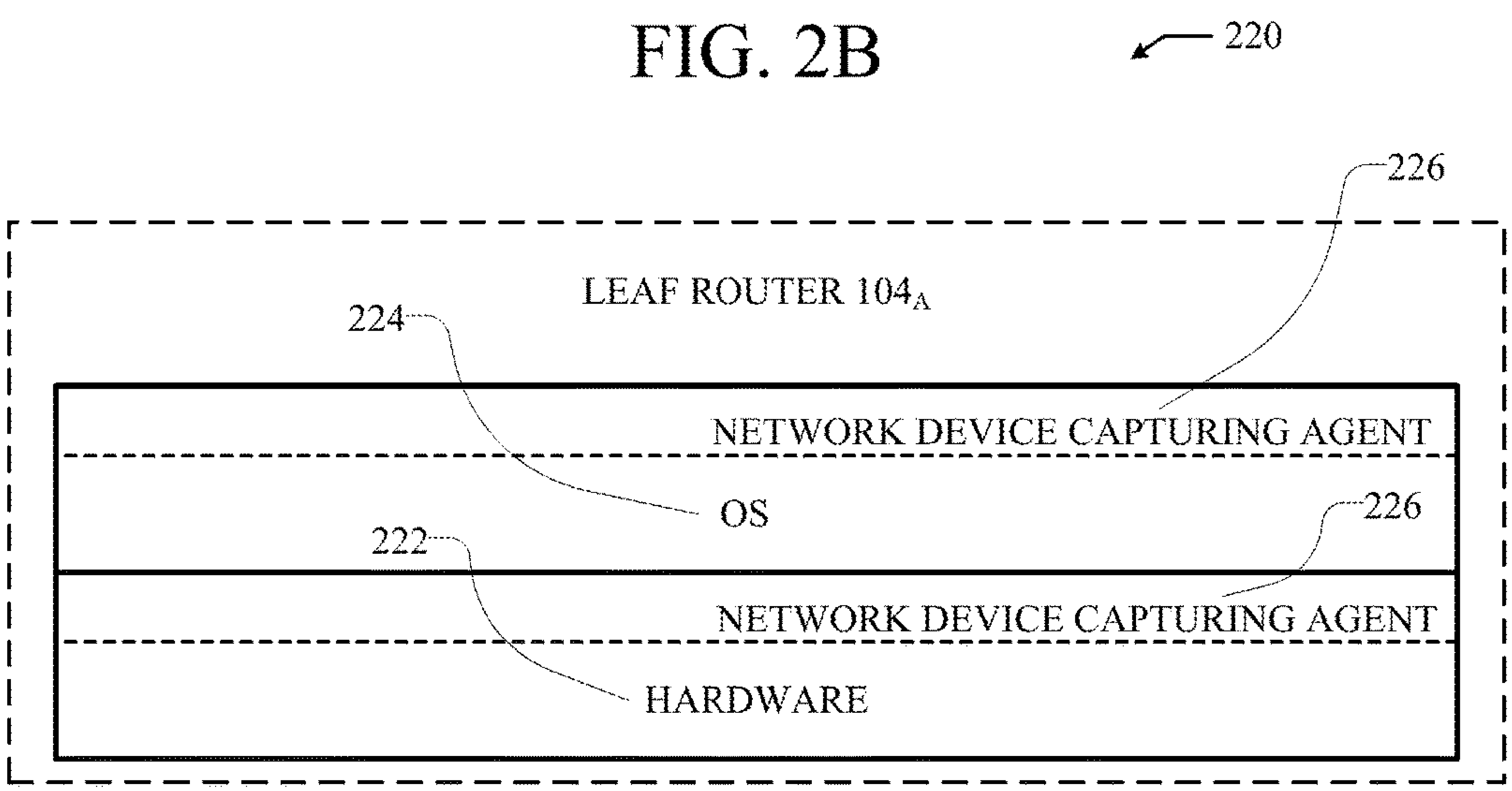
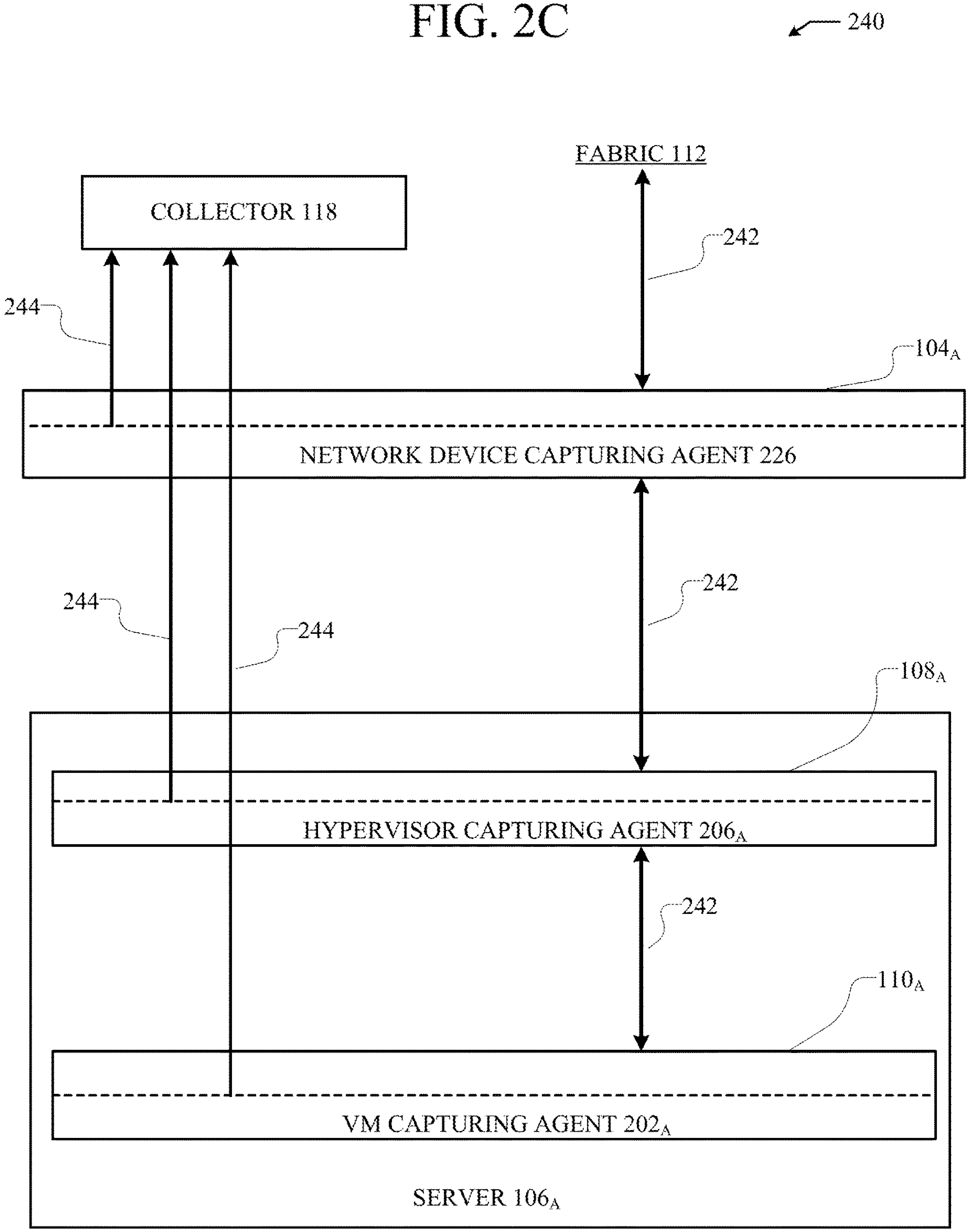

220
226
LEAF ROUTER 104A
224
NETWORK DEVICE CAPTURING AGENT
OS
222
226
NETWORK DEVICE CAPTURING AGENT
HARDWARE

FIG. 2C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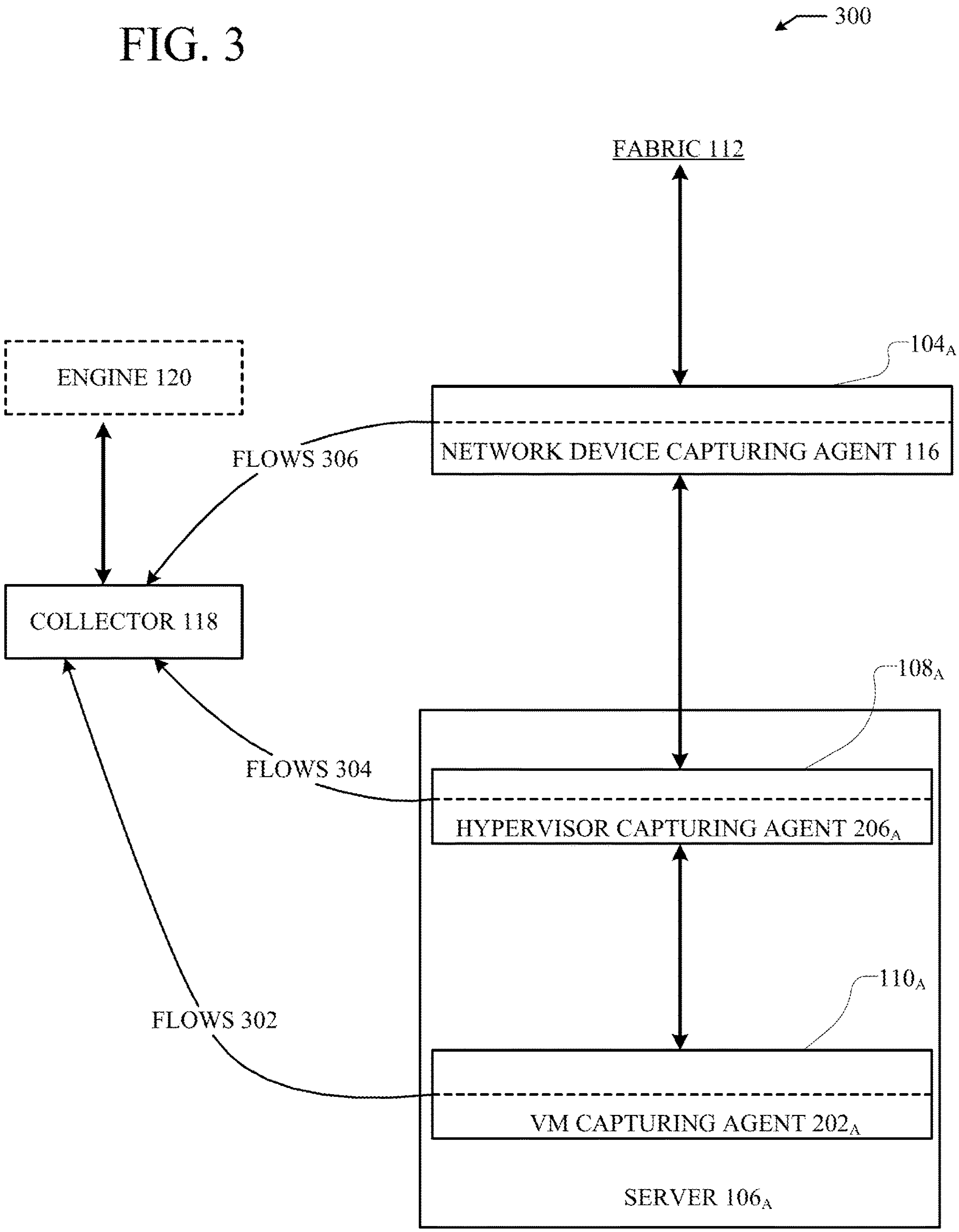
COLLECTOR 118
242
244
104A
NETWORK DEVICE CAPTURING AGENT 226
242
244
244
108A
HYPERVISOR CAPTURING AGENT 206A
242
110A
VM CAPTURING AGENT 202A
SERVER 106A

FIG. 3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104A
ENGINE 120
NETWORK DEVICE CAPTURING AGENT 116
FLOWS 306
COLLECTOR 118
108A
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HYPERVISOR CAPTURING AGENT 206A
110A
FLOWS 302
VM CAPTURING AGENT 202A
SERVER 106A

FIG. 4

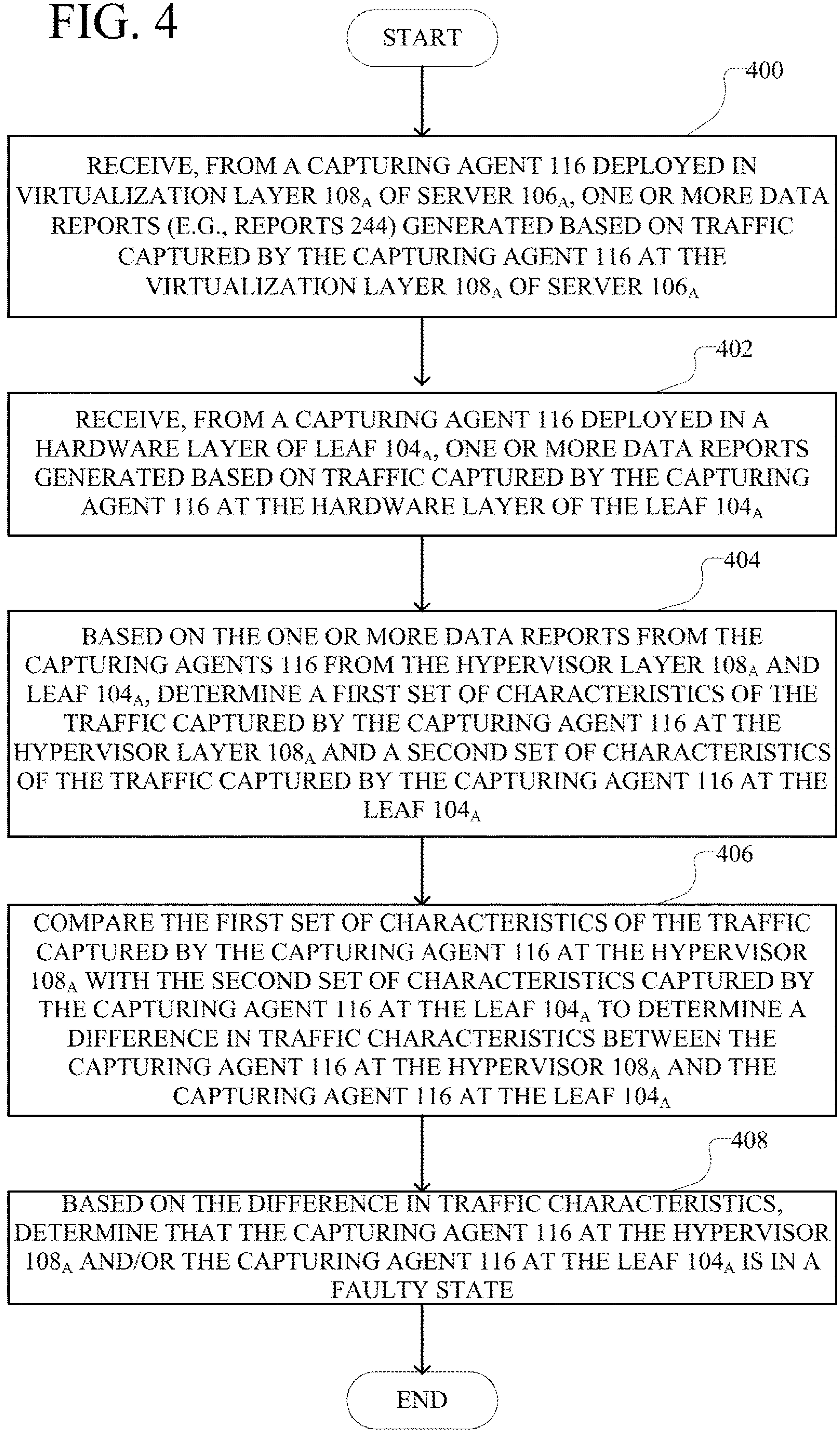

START
400
RECEIVE, FROM A CAPTURING AGENT 116 DEPLOYED IN VIRTUALIZATION LAYER 108_A OF SERVER 106_A, ONE OR MORE DATA REPORTS (E.G., REPORTS 244) GENERATED BASED ON TRAFFIC CAPTURED BY THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE VIRTUALIZATION LAYER 108_A OF SERVER 106_A
402
RECEIVE, FROM A CAPTURING AGENT 116 DEPLOYED IN A HARDWARE LAYER OF LEAF 104_A, ONE OR MORE DATA REPORTS GENERATED BASED ON TRAFFIC CAPTURED BY THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE HARDWARE LAYER OF THE LEAF 104_A
404
BASED ON THE ONE OR MORE DATA REPORTS FROM THE CAPTURING AGENTS 116 FROM THE HYPERVISOR LAYER 108_A AND LEAF 104_A, DETERMINE A FIRST SET OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAFFIC CAPTURED BY THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE HYPERVISOR LAYER 108_A AND A SECOND SET OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAFFIC CAPTURED BY THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE LEAF 104_A
406
COMPARE THE FIRST SET OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAFFIC CAPTURED BY THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE HYPERVISOR 108_A WITH THE SECOND SET OF CHARACTERISTICS CAPTURED BY THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE LEAF 104_A TO DETERMINE A DIFFERENCE IN TRAFFIC CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE HYPERVISOR 108_A AND THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE LEAF 104_A
408
BASED ON THE DIFFERENCE IN TRAFFIC CHARACTERISTICS, DETERMINE THAT THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE HYPERVISOR 108_A AND/OR THE CAPTURING AGENT 116 AT THE LEAF 104_A IS IN A FAULTY STATE
END

FIG. 5

500

Flow ID; Sensor ID; Timestamp; Interval; Duration; FlowDirection; AppID; Port; DestAddress; SrcAddress; Interface; Protocol; Event; Flag, Tag; Label; Process; User;…; Bytes; Sensor Type

FIG. 6

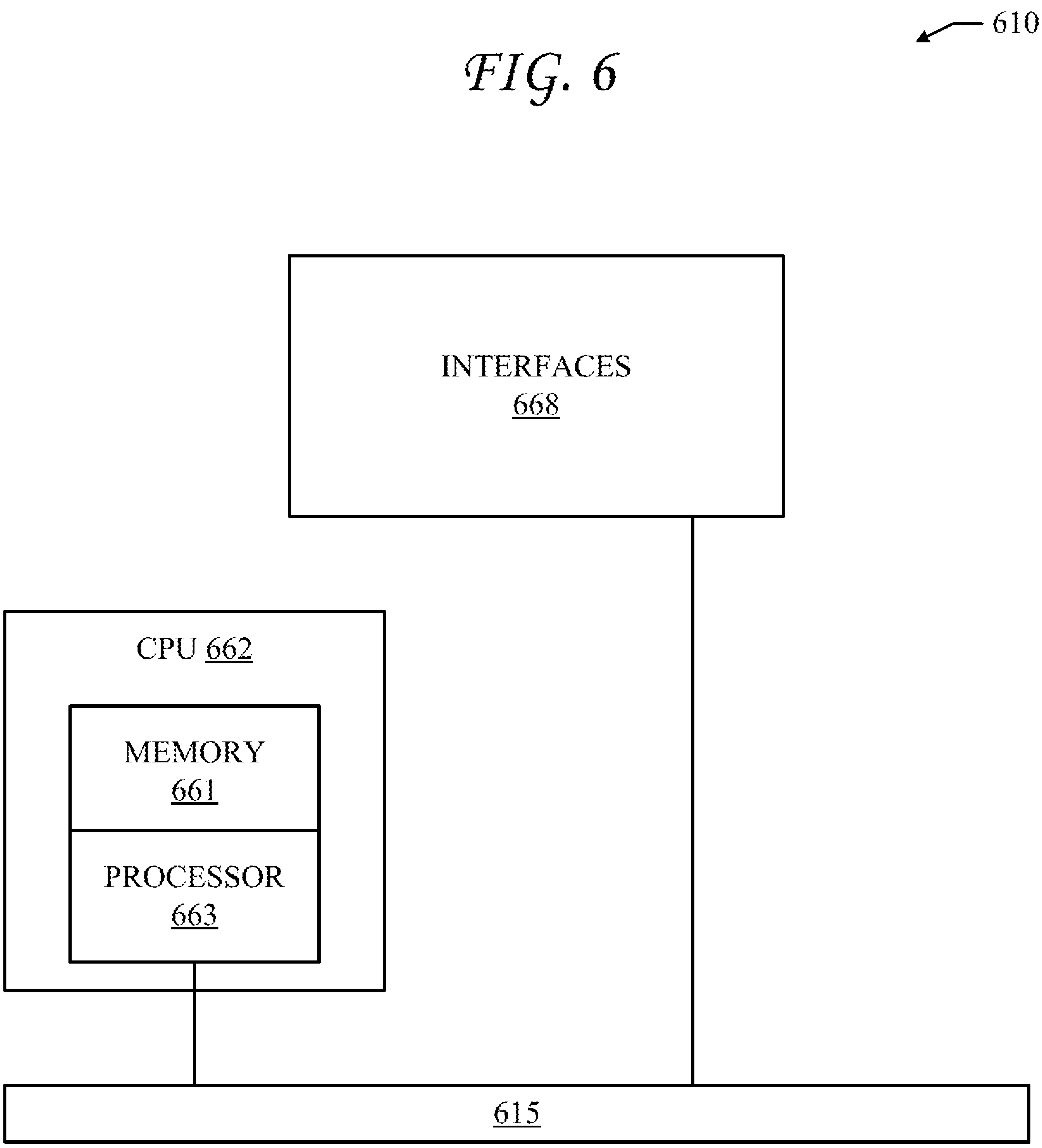
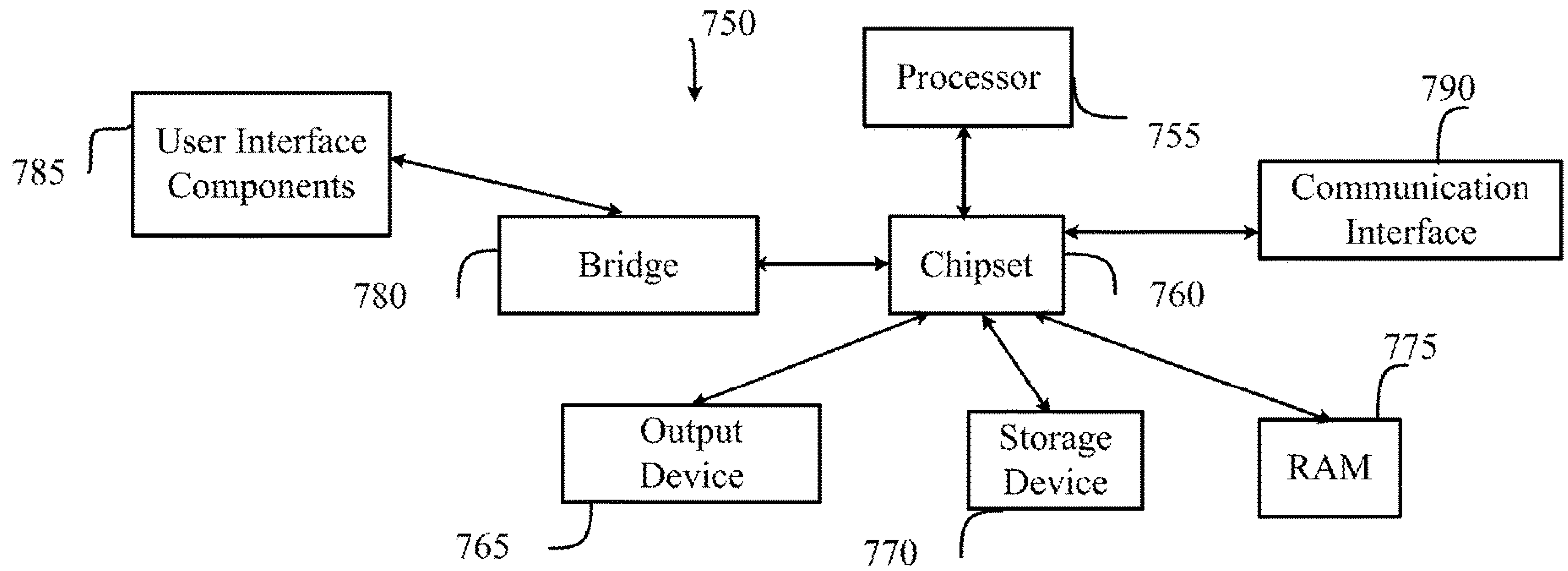


FIG. 7B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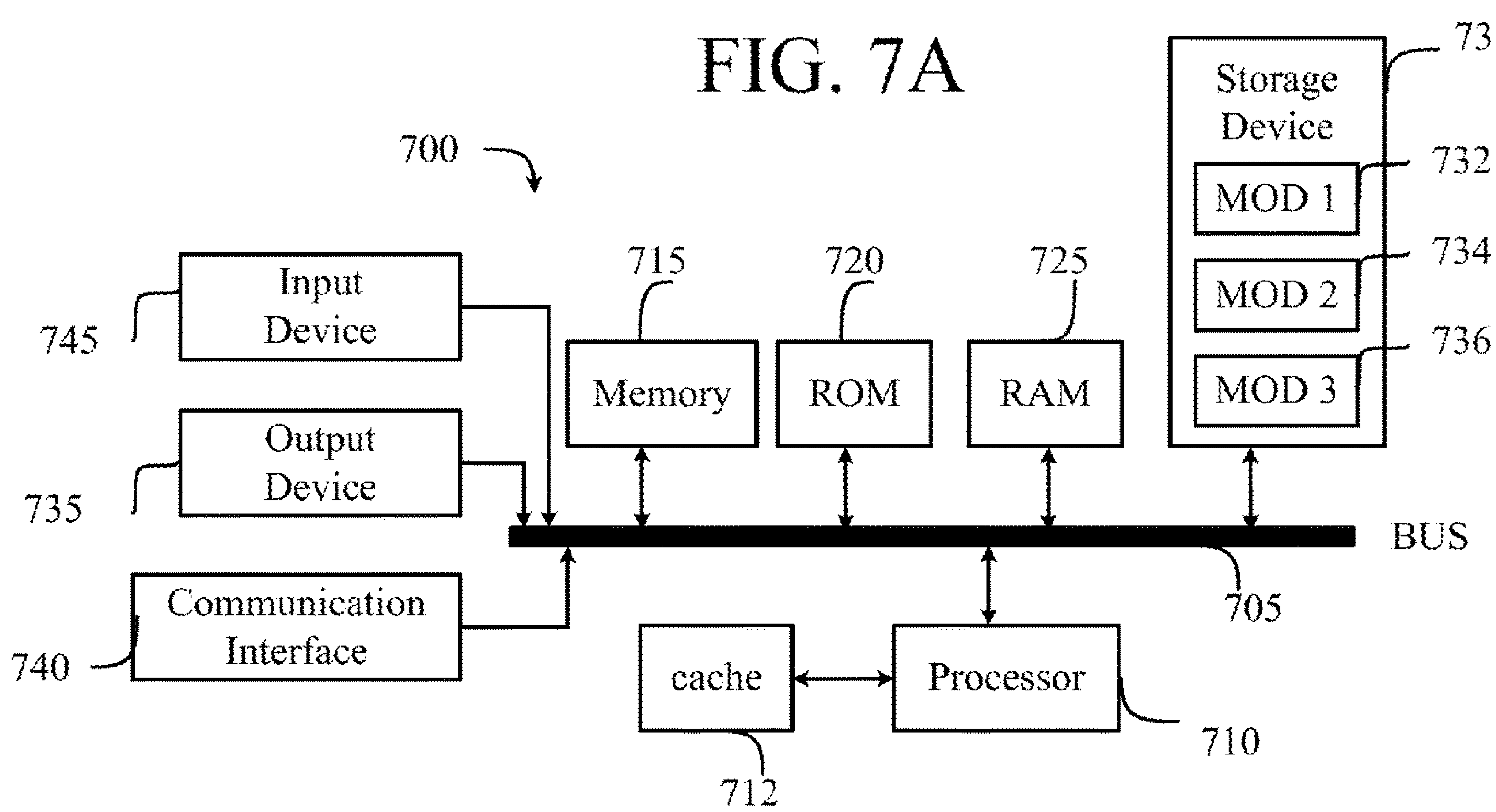
790
User Interface Components
785
Communication Interface
Bridge
Chipset
780
760
775
Output Device
Storage Device
RAM
765
770

FIG. 7A


730
Storage Device
700
732
MOD 1
734
715
720
725
MOD 2
745
Input Device
736
Memory
ROM
RAM
MOD 3
Output Device
735
BUS
705
Communication Interface
740
cache
Processor
710
712

TECHNOLOGIES FOR MANAGING COMPROMISED SENSORS IN VIRTUALIZED ENVIRONMENTS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/171,763 filed on Jun. 2, 2016, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/171,899 filed on Jun. 5, 2015, the contents of which are incorporated by reference in their entireties.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present technology pertains to network analytics, and more specifically to managing compromised sensors deployed in multi-layer virtualized environments.

BACKGROUND

In a network environment, capturing agents or sensors can be placed at various devices or elements in the network to collect flow data and network statistics from different locations. The collected data from the capturing agents can be analyzed to monitor and troubleshoot the network. The data collected from the capturing agents can provide valuable details about the status, security, or performance of the network, as well as any network elements. Information about the capturing agents can also help interpret the data from the capturing agents, in order to infer or ascertain additional details from the collected data. For example, understanding the placement (e.g., deployment location) of a capturing agent within a device or virtualized environment can provide a context to the data reported by the capturing agents, which can further help identify specific patterns or conditions in the network. Unfortunately, however, the capturing agents can also create new security vulnerabilities, as the software code from the capturing agents can expose the devices to potential exploitation by hackers or malicious software code, such as viruses and malware.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order to describe the manner in which the above-recited and other advantages and features of the disclosure can be obtained, a more particular description of the principles briefly described above will be rendered by reference to specific embodiments thereof which are illustrated in the appended drawings. Understanding that these drawings depict only exemplary embodiments of the disclosure and are not therefore to be considered to be limiting of its scope, the principles herein are described and explained with additional specificity and detail through the use of the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. **1** illustrates a diagram of an example network environment;

FIG. **2**A illustrates a schematic diagram of an example capturing agent deployment in a virtualized environment;

FIG. **2**B illustrates a schematic diagram of an example capturing agent deployment in an example network device;

FIG. **2**C illustrates a schematic diagram of an example reporting system in an example capturing agent topology;

FIG. **3** illustrates a schematic diagram of an example configuration for collecting capturing agent reports;

FIG. **4** illustrates an example method embodiment;

FIG. **5** illustrates a listing of example fields on a capturing agent report;

FIG. **6** illustrates an example network device; and

FIGS. **7**A and **7**B illustrate example system embodiments.

DESCRIPTION OF EXAMPLE EMBODIMENTS

Various embodiments of the disclosure are discussed in detail below. While specific implementations are discussed, it should be understood that this is done for illustration purposes only. A person skilled in the relevant art will recognize that other components and configurations may be used without parting from the spirit and scope of the disclosure.

Overview

Additional features and advantages of the disclosure will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or can be learned by practice of the herein disclosed principles. The features and advantages of the disclosure can be realized and obtained by means of the instruments and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims. These and other features of the disclosure will become more fully apparent from the following description and appended claims, or can be learned by the practice of the principles set forth herein.

The approaches set forth herein can be used to detect and correct compromised capturing agents (e.g., sensors) in virtualized network environments. Capturing agents can provide very useful traffic information and statistics for troubleshooting, managing, and protecting a network and its devices. However, while the capturing agents can provide numerous benefits and advantages, the addition of these elements in the network can also present additional risks of attacks and exploitation. For example, capturing agents can be manipulated or compromised by hackers. A compromised or hacked capturing agent can create additional resource consumption, which can negatively impact network and system performance, and may result in data breaches or further attacks. The approaches herein can provide detection and correction mechanisms to protect against attacks and exploits of capturing agents deployed in a network.

The mechanisms for detecting a compromised capturing agent can include multiple checkpoints. For example, a first checkpoint can be based on current and historical data, such as statistics and usage information, reported by capturing agents in the network. A comparison of current statistics and data with historical statistics and data can identify abnormal patterns which may indicate potential exploits. Moreover, a second checkpoint can be based on a comparison of data reported by capturing agent in a virtualized layer, such as a hypervisor, with data reported by capturing agents in a hardware layer. For example, a significant discrepancy between the data reported by a capturing agent in a hypervisor and the data reported by a capturing agent in a hardware layer can indicate a potential exploit.

Further, the approaches herein can provide various corrective mechanisms for protecting against an exploit, such as a compromised capturing agent. For example, if a capturing agent is compromised, the collecting device(s) can prevent data sent or reported by such capturing agent from being distributed to other devices or retained by the collecting device(s). Moreover, the amount of data reported by such capturing agent can be adjusted to limit or reduce the amount of reports, and consequently the burden on the network, generated by the compromised capturing agent.

Disclosed are systems, methods, and computer-readable storage media for managing compromised sensors in multi-tiered virtualized environments. In some examples, a system can receive, from a first capturing agent deployed in a virtualization layer (e.g., hypervisor) of a first device, one or more data reports generated based on traffic captured by the first capturing agent at the virtualization layer of the first device. The system can also receive, from a second capturing agent deployed in a hardware layer of a second device, one or more data reports generated based on traffic captured by the second capturing agent at the hardware layer of the second device. Based on the one or more data reports from the first capturing agent and the second capturing agent, the system can determine a first set of characteristics of the traffic captured by the first capturing agent, such as an amount or type of traffic captured at the hypervisor layer, and a second set of characteristics of the traffic captured by the second capturing agent, such as an amount or type of traffic at the hardware layer.

The system can compare the first set of characteristics of the traffic captured by the first capturing agent with the second set of characteristics captured by the second capturing agent to determine a multi-layer difference in traffic characteristics, such as a delta in the amount or type of traffic reported by each agent. Based on the multi-layer difference in traffic characteristics, the system can determine that the first capturing agent and/or the second capturing agent is in a faulty state, such as a compromised state.

The system can also compare the one or more reports from the first and second capturing agents with historical data from the first and second capturing agents to determine abnormal patterns in network traffic. For example, the system can compare the one or more current reports from the first and second capturing agents with one or more previous reports from the first and second capturing agents to detect any changes in patterns. Such changes can indicate that the first and/or second capturing agent is in a faulty state, such as a compromised state.

The system can take corrective action if it determines that the first and/or second capturing agent is in a faulty state. For example, the system can mark or annotate traffic reported from a compromised capturing agent, drop or block date reported by the compromised capturing agent, reduce or summarize the data reported by the compromised capturing agent, infer a faulty state of other capturing agents, generate an alert, send a notification to an administrator, etc.

Description

The disclosed technology addresses the need in the art for detecting compromised sensors deployed at multiple layers of a network. Disclosed are systems, methods, and computer-readable storage media for detecting and correcting sensor exploits in a network. A description of an example network environment, as illustrated in FIG. **1**, is first disclosed herein. A discussion of capturing agents will then follow. The discussion continues with a discussion of detecting compromised capturing agents and taking corrective actions. The discussion then concludes with a description of example systems and devices. These variations shall be described herein as the various embodiments are set forth. The disclosure now turns to FIG. **1**.

FIG. **1** illustrates a diagram of example network environment **100**. Fabric **112** can represent the underlay (i.e., physical network) of network environment **100**. Fabric **112** can include spine routers 1-N (**102**$_{A-N}$) (collectively "**102**") and leaf routers 1-N (**104**$_{A-N}$) (collectively "**104**"). Leaf routers **104** can reside at the edge of fabric **112**, and can thus represent the physical network edges. Leaf routers **104** can be, for example, top-of-rack ("ToR") switches, aggregation switches, gateways, ingress and/or egress switches, provider edge devices, and/or any other type of routing or switching device.

Leaf routers **104** can be responsible for routing and/or bridging tenant or endpoint packets and applying network policies. Spine routers **102** can perform switching and routing within fabric **112**. Thus, network connectivity in fabric **112** can flow from spine routers **102** to leaf routers **104**, and vice versa.

Leaf routers **104** can provide servers **1-4** (**106**$_{A-D}$) (collectively "**106**"), hypervisors 1-4 (**108**$_A$-**108**$_D$) (collectively "**108**"), virtual machines (VMs) 1-4 (**110**$_A$-**110**$_D$) (collectively "**110**"), collectors **118**, engines **120**, and the Layer 2 (L2) network access to fabric **112**. For example, leaf routers **104** can encapsulate and decapsulate packets to and from servers **106** in order to enable communications throughout environment **100**. Leaf routers **104** can also connect other network-capable device(s) or network(s), such as a firewall, a database, a server, etc., to the fabric **112**. Leaf routers **104** can also provide any other servers, resources, endpoints, external networks, VMs, services, tenants, or workloads with access to fabric **112**.

VMs **110** can be virtual machines hosted by hypervisors **108** running on servers **106**. VMs **110** can include workloads running on a guest operating system on a respective server. Hypervisors **108** can provide a layer of software, firmware, and/or hardware that creates and runs the VMs **110**. Hypervisors **108** can allow VMs **110** to share hardware resources on servers **106**, and the hardware resources on servers **106** to appear as multiple, separate hardware platforms. Moreover, hypervisors **108** and servers **106** can host one or more VMs **110**. For example, server **106**$_A$ and hypervisor **108**$_A$ can host VMs **110**$_{A-B}$.

In some cases, VMs **110** and/or hypervisors **108** can be migrated to other servers **106**. For example, VM **110**$_A$ can be migrated to server **106**$_C$ and hypervisor **108**$_B$. Servers **106** can similarly be migrated to other locations in network environment **100**. For example, a server connected to a specific leaf router can be changed to connect to a different or additional leaf router. In some cases, some or all of servers **106**, hypervisors **108**, and/or VMs **110** can represent tenant space. Tenant space can include workloads, services, applications, devices, and/or resources that are associated with one or more clients or subscribers. Accordingly, traffic in network environment **100** can be routed based on specific tenant policies, spaces, agreements, configurations, etc. Moreover, addressing can vary between one or more tenants. In some configurations, tenant spaces can be divided into logical segments and/or networks and separated from logical segments and/or networks associated with other tenants.

Any of leaf routers **104**, servers **106**, hypervisors **108**, and VMs **110** can include capturing agent **116** (also referred to as a "sensor") configured to capture network data, and report any portion of the captured data to collector **118**. Capturing agents **116** can be processes, agents, modules, drivers, or components deployed on a respective system or system layer (e.g., a server, VM, virtual container, hypervisor, leaf router, etc.), configured to capture network data for the respective system (e.g., data received or transmitted by the respective system), and report some or all of the captured data and statistics to collector **118**.

For example, a VM capturing agent can run as a process, kernel module, software element, or kernel driver on the guest operating system installed in a VM and configured to capture and report data (e.g., network and/or system data) processed (e.g., sent, received, generated, etc.) by the VM.

A hypervisor capturing agent can run as a process, kernel module, software element, or kernel driver on the host operating system installed at the hypervisor layer and configured to capture and report data (e.g., network and/or system data) processed (e.g., sent, received, generated, etc.) by the hypervisor.

A container capturing agent can run as a process, kernel module, software element, or kernel driver on the operating system of a device, such as a switch or server, which can be configured to capture and report data processed by the container.

A server capturing agent can run as a process, kernel module, software element, or kernel driver on the host operating system of a server and configured to capture and report data (e.g., network and/or system data) processed (e.g., sent, received, generated, etc.) by the server.

A network device capturing agent can run as a process, software element, or component in a network device, such as leaf routers **104**, and configured to capture and report data (e.g., network and/or system data) processed (e.g., sent, received, generated, etc.) by the network device.

Capturing agents **116** can be configured to report observed data, statistics, and/or metadata about one or more packets, flows, communications, processes, events, and/or activities to collector **118**. For example, capturing agents **116** can capture network data and statistics processed (e.g., sent, received, generated, dropped, forwarded, etc.) by the system or host (e.g., server, hypervisor, VM, container, switch, etc.) of the capturing agents **116** (e.g., where the capturing agents **116** are deployed). The capturing agents **116** can also report the network data and statistics to one or more devices, such as collectors **118** and/or engines **120**. For example, the capturing agents **116** can report an amount of traffic processed by their host, a frequency of the traffic processed by their host, a type of traffic processed (e.g., sent, received, generated, etc.) by their host, a source or destination of the traffic processed by their host, a pattern in the traffic, an amount of traffic dropped or blocked by their host, types of requests or data in the traffic received, discrepancies in traffic (e.g., spoofed addresses, invalid addresses, hidden sender, etc.), protocols used in communications, type or characteristics of responses to traffic by the hosts of the capturing agents **116**, what processes have triggered specific packets, etc.

Capturing agents **116** can also capture and report information about the system or host of the capturing agents **116** (e.g., type of host, type of environment, status of host, conditions of the host, etc.). Such information can include, for example, data or metadata of active or previously active processes of the system, operating system user identifiers, kernel modules loaded or used, network software characteristics (e.g., software switch, virtual network card, etc.), metadata of files on the system, system alerts, number and/or identity of applications at the host, domain information, networking information (e.g., address, topology, settings, connectivity, etc.), session information (e.g., session identifier), faults or errors, memory or CPU usage, threads, filename and/or path, services, security information or settings, and so forth.

Capturing agents **116** may also analyze the processes running on the respective VMs, hypervisors, servers, or network devices to determine specifically which process is responsible for a particular flow of network traffic. Similarly, capturing agents **116** may determine which operating system user (e.g., root, system, John Doe, Admin, etc.) is responsible for a given flow. Reported data from capturing agents **116** can provide details or statistics particular to one or more tenants or customers. For example, reported data from a subset of capturing agents **116** deployed throughout devices or elements in a tenant space can provide information about the performance, use, quality, events, processes, security status, characteristics, statistics, patterns, conditions, configurations, topology, and/or any other information for the particular tenant space.

Collectors **118** can be one or more devices, modules, workloads, VMs, containers, and/or processes capable of receiving data from capturing agents **116**. Collectors **118** can thus collect reports and data from capturing agents **116**. Collectors **118** can be deployed anywhere in network environment **100** and/or even on remote networks capable of communicating with network environment **100**. For example, one or more collectors can be deployed within fabric **112**, on the L2 network, or on one or more of the servers **106**, VMs **110**, hypervisors. Collectors **118** can be hosted on a server or a cluster of servers, for example. In some cases, collectors **118** can be implemented in one or more servers in a distributed fashion.

As previously noted, collectors **118** can include one or more collectors. Moreover, a collector can be configured to receive reported data from all capturing agents **116** or a subset of capturing agents **116**. For example, a collector can be assigned to a subset of capturing agents **116** so the data received by that specific collector is limited to data from the subset of capturing agents **116**. Collectors **118** can be configured to aggregate data from all capturing agents **116** and/or a subset of capturing agents **116**. Further, collectors **118** can be configured to analyze some or all of the data reported by capturing agents **116**.

Environment **100** can include one or more analytics engines **120** configured to analyze the data reported to collectors **118**. For example, engines **120** can be configured to receive collected data from collectors **118**, aggregate the data, analyze the data (individually and/or aggregated), generate reports, identify conditions, compute statistics, visualize reported data, troubleshoot conditions, visualize the network and/or portions of the network (e.g., a tenant space), generate alerts, identify patterns, calculate misconfigurations, identify errors, generate suggestions, generate testing, detect compromised elements (e.g., capturing agents **116**, devices, servers, switches, etc.), and/or perform any other analytics functions.

Engines **120** can include one or more modules or software programs for performing such analytics. Further, engines **120** can reside on one or more servers, devices, VMs, nodes, etc. For example, engines **120** can be separate VMs or servers, an individual VM or server, or a cluster of servers or applications. Engines **120** can reside within the fabric **112**, within the L2 network, outside of the environment **100** (e.g., WAN **114**), in one or more segments or networks coupled with the fabric **112** (e.g., overlay network coupled with the fabric **112**), etc. Engines **120** can be coupled with the fabric **112** via the leaf switches **104**, for example.

While collectors **118** and engines **120** are shown as separate entities, this is simply a non-limiting example for illustration purposes, as other configurations are also contemplated herein. For example, any of collectors **118** and engines **120** can be part of a same or separate entity. Moreover, any of the collector, aggregation, and analytics functions can be implemented by one entity (e.g., a collector **118** or engine **120**) or separately implemented by multiple entities (e.g., engines **120** and/or collectors **118**).

Each of the capturing agents **116** can use a respective address (e.g., internet protocol (IP) address, port number, etc.) of their host to send information to collectors **118** and/or any other destination. Collectors **118** may also be associated with their respective addresses such as IP addresses. Moreover, capturing agents **116** can periodically send information about flows they observe to collectors **118**. Capturing agents **116** can be configured to report each and every flow they observe or a subset of flows they observe. For example, capturing agents **116** can report every flow always, every flow within a period of time, every flow at one or more intervals, or a subset of flows during a period of time or at one or more intervals.

Capturing agents **116** can report a list of flows that were active during a period of time (e.g., between the current time and the time of the last report). The consecutive periods of time of observance can be represented as pre-defined or adjustable time series. The series can be adjusted to a specific level of granularity. Thus, the time periods can be adjusted to control the level of details in statistics and can be customized based on specific requirements or conditions, such as security, scalability, bandwidth, storage, etc. The time series information can also be implemented to focus on more important flows or components (e.g., VMs) by varying the time intervals. The communication channel between a capturing agent and collector **118** can also create a flow in every reporting interval. Thus, the information transmitted or reported by capturing agents **116** can also include information about the flow created by the communication channel.

When referring to a capturing agent's host herein, the host can refer to the physical device or component hosting the capturing agent (e.g., server, networking device, ASIC, etc.), the virtualized environment hosting the capturing agent (e.g., hypervisor, virtual machine, etc.), the operating system hosting the capturing agent (e.g., guest operating system, host operating system, etc.), and/or system layer hosting the capturing agent (e.g., hardware layer, operating system layer, hypervisor layer, virtual machine layer, etc.).

FIG. **2**A illustrates a schematic diagram of an example capturing agent deployment **200** in a server **106**$_A$. Server **106**$_A$ can execute and host one or more VMs **110**$_{A-N}$ (collectively "**110**"). VMs **110** can be configured to run workloads (e.g., applications, services, processes, functions, etc.) based on hardware resources **210** on server **106**$_A$. VMs **110** can run on guest operating systems **204**$_{A-N}$ (collectively "**204**") on a virtual operating platform provided by hypervisor **108**$_A$. Each VM **110** can run a respective guest operating system **204** which can be the same or different as other guest operating systems **204** associated with other VMs **110** on server **106**$_A$. Each of guest operating systems **204** can execute one or more processes, which may in turn be programs, applications, modules, drivers, services, widgets, etc. Moreover, each VM **110** can have one or more network addresses, such as an internet protocol (IP) address. VMs **110** can thus communicate with hypervisor **108**$_A$, server **106**$_A$, and/or any remote devices or networks using the one or more network addresses.

Hypervisor **108**$_A$ (otherwise known as a virtual machine manager or monitor) can be a layer of software, firmware, and/or hardware that creates and runs VMs **110**. Guest operating systems **204** running on VMs **110** can share virtualized hardware resources created by hypervisor **108**$_A$. The virtualized hardware resources can provide the illusion of separate hardware components. Moreover, the virtualized hardware resources can perform as physical hardware components (e.g., memory, storage, processor, network interface, peripherals, etc.), and can be driven by hardware resources **210** on server **106**$_A$. Hypervisor **108**$_A$ can have one or more network addresses, such as an internet protocol (IP) address, to communicate with other devices, components, or networks. For example, hypervisor **108**$_A$ can have a dedicated IP address which it can use to communicate with VMs **110**, server **106**$_A$, and/or any remote devices or networks.

Hypervisor **108**$_A$ can be assigned a network address, such as an IP, with a global scope. For example, hypervisor **108**$_A$ can have an IP that can be reached or seen by VMs **110**$_{A-N}$ as well any other devices in the network environment **100** illustrated in FIG. **1**. On the other hand, VMs **110** can have a network address, such as an IP, with a local scope. For example, VM **110**$_A$ can have an IP that is within a local network segment where VM **110**$_A$ resides and/or which may not be directly reached or seen from other network segments in the network environment **100**.

Hardware resources **210** of server **106**$_A$ can provide the underlying physical hardware that drive operations and functionalities provided by server **106**$_A$, hypervisor **108**$_A$, and VMs **110**. Hardware resources **210** can include, for example, one or more memory resources, one or more storage resources, one or more communication interfaces, one or more processors, one or more circuit boards, one or more buses, one or more extension cards, one or more power supplies, one or more antennas, one or more peripheral components, etc. Additional examples of hardware resources are described below with reference to FIGS. **10** and **11**A-B.

Server **106**$_A$ can also include one or more host operating systems (not shown). The number of host operating systems can vary by configuration. For example, some configurations can include a dual boot configuration that allows server **106**$_A$ to boot into one of multiple host operating systems. In other configurations, server **106**$_A$ may run a single host operating system. Host operating systems can run on hardware resources **210**. In some cases, hypervisor **108**$_A$ can run on, or utilize, a host operating system on server **106**$_A$. Each of the host operating systems can execute one or more processes, which may be programs, applications, modules, drivers, services, widgets, etc.

Server **106**$_A$ can also have one or more network addresses, such as an IP address, to communicate with other devices, components, or networks. For example, server **106**$_A$ can have an IP address assigned to a communications interface from hardware resources **210**, which it can use to communicate with VMs **110**, hypervisor **108**$_A$, leaf router **104**$_A$ in FIG. **1**, collectors **118** in FIG. **1**, and/or any remote devices or networks.

VM capturing agents **202**$_{A-N}$ (collectively "**202**") can be deployed on one or more of VMs **110**. VM capturing agents **202** can be data and packet inspection agents or sensors deployed on VMs **110** to capture packets, flows, processes, events, traffic, and/or any data flowing into, out of, or through VMs **110**. VM capturing agents **202** can be configured to export or report any data collected or captured by the capturing agents **202** to a remote entity, such as collectors **118**, for example. VM capturing agents **202** can communicate or report such data using a network address of the respective VMs **110** (e.g., VM IP address).

VM capturing agents **202** can capture and report any traffic (e.g., packets, flows, etc.) sent, received, generated, and/or processed by VMs **110**. For example, capturing agents **202** can report every packet or flow of communication sent and received by VMs **110**. Such communication channel between capturing agents **202** and collectors **108** creates a flow in every monitoring period or interval and the flow generated by capturing agents **202** may be denoted as a control flow. Moreover, any communication sent or received by VMs **110**, including data reported from capturing agents **202**, can create a network flow. VM capturing agents **202** can report such flows in the form of a control flow to a remote device, such as collectors **118** illustrated in FIG. **1**.

VM capturing agents **202** can report each flow separately or aggregated with other flows. When reporting a flow via a control flow, VM capturing agents **202** can include a capturing agent identifier that identifies capturing agents **202** as reporting the associated flow. VM capturing agents **202** can also include in the control flow a flow identifier, an IP address, a timestamp, metadata, a process ID, an OS username associated with the process ID, a host or environment descriptor (e.g., type of software bridge or virtual network card, type of host such as a hypervisor or VM, etc.), and any other information, as further described below. In addition, capturing agents **202** can append the process and user information (i.e., which process and/or user is associated with a particular flow) to the control flow. The additional information as identified above can be applied to the control flow as labels. Alternatively, the additional information can be included as part of a header, a trailer, or a payload.

VM capturing agents **202** can also report multiple flows as a set of flows. When reporting a set of flows, VM capturing agents **202** can include a flow identifier for the set of flows and/or a flow identifier for each flow in the set of flows. VM capturing agents **202** can also include one or more timestamps and other information as previously explained.

VM capturing agents **202** can run as a process, kernel module, or kernel driver on guest operating systems **204** of VMs **110**. VM capturing agents **202** can thus monitor any traffic sent, received, or processed by VMs **110**, any processes running on guest operating systems **204**, any users and user activities on guest operating system **204**, any workloads on VMs **110**, etc.

Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can be deployed on hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can be a data inspection agent or sensor deployed on hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ to capture traffic (e.g., packets, flows, etc.) and/or data flowing through hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can be configured to export or report any data collected or captured by hypervisor capturing agent **206** to a remote entity, such as collectors **118**, for example. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can communicate or report such data using a network address of hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, such as an IP address of hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$.

Because hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ can see traffic and data originating from VMs **110**, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can also capture and report any data (e.g., traffic data) associated with VMs **110**. For example, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can report every packet or flow of communication sent or received by VMs **110** and/or VM capturing agents **202**. Moreover, any communication sent or received by hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, including data reported from hypervisor capturing agent **206**, can create a network flow. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can report such flows in the form of a control flow to a remote device, such as collectors **118** illustrated in FIG. **1**. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can report each flow separately and/or in combination with other flows or data.

When reporting a flow, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can include a capturing agent identifier that identifies hypervisor capturing agent **206** as reporting the flow. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can also include in the control flow a flow identifier, an IP address, a timestamp, metadata, a process ID, and any other information, as explained below. In addition, capturing agents **206** can append the process and user information (i.e., which process and/or user is associated with a particular flow) to the control flow. The additional information as identified above can be applied to the control flow as labels. Alternatively, the additional information can be included as part of a header, a trailer, or a payload.

Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can also report multiple flows as a set of flows. When reporting a set of flows, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can include a flow identifier for the set of flows and/or a flow identifier for each flow in the set of flows. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can also include one or more timestamps and other information as previously explained, such as process and user information.

As previously explained, any communication captured or reported by VM capturing agents **202** can flow through hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$. Thus, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can observe and capture any flows or packets reported by VM capturing agents **202**, including any control flows. Accordingly, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can also report any packets or flows reported by VM capturing agents **202** and any control flows generated by VM capturing agents **202**. For example, VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ on VM 1 ($\mathbf{110}_A$) captures flow 1 ("F1") and reports F1 to collector **118** on FIG. **1**. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** on hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ can also see and capture F1, as F1 would traverse hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ when being sent or received by VM 1 ($\mathbf{110}_A$). Accordingly, hypervisor capturing agent **206** on hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ can also report F1 to collector **118**. Thus, collector **118** can receive a report of F1 from VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ on VM 1 ($\mathbf{110}_A$) and another report of F1 from hypervisor capturing agent **206** on hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$.

When reporting F1, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can report F1 as a message or report that is separate from the message or report of F1 transmitted by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ on VM 1 ($\mathbf{110}_A$). However, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can also, or otherwise, report F1 as a message or report that includes or appends the message or report of F1 transmitted by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ on VM 1 ($\mathbf{110}_A$). In other words, hypervisor capturing agent **206** can report F1 as a separate message or report from VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$'s message or report of F1, and/or a same message or report that includes both a report of F1 by hypervisor capturing agent **206** and the report of F1 by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ at VM 1 ($\mathbf{110}_A$). In this way, VM capturing agents **202** at VMs **110** can report packets or flows received or sent by VMs **110**, and hypervisor capturing agent **206** at hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ can report packets or flows received or sent by hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, including any flows or packets received or sent by VMs **110** and/or reported by VM capturing agents **202**.

Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can run as a process, kernel module, or kernel driver on the host operating system associated with hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$. Hypervisor capturing agent **206** can thus monitor any traffic sent and received by hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, any processes associated with hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, etc.

Server $\mathbf{106}_A$ can also have server capturing agent **208** running on it. Server capturing agent **208** can be a data inspection agent or sensor deployed on server $\mathbf{106}_A$ to capture data (e.g., packets, flows, traffic data, etc.) on server $\mathbf{106}_A$. Server capturing agent **208** can be configured to export or report any data collected or captured by server capturing agent **206** to a remote entity, such as collector **118**, for example. Server capturing agent **208** can communicate or report such data using a network address of server $\mathbf{106}_A$, such as an IP address of server $\mathbf{106}_A$.

Server capturing agent **208** can capture and report any packet or flow of communication associated with server 106_A. For example, capturing agent **208** can report every packet or flow of communication sent or received by one or more communication interfaces of server 106_A. Moreover, any communication sent or received by server 106_A, including data reported from capturing agents **202** and **206**, can create a network flow associated with server 106_A. Server capturing agent **208** can report such flows in the form of a control flow to a remote device, such as collector **118** illustrated in FIG. **1**. Server capturing agent **208** can report each flow separately or in combination. When reporting a flow, server capturing agent **208** can include a capturing agent identifier that identifies server capturing agent **208** as reporting the associated flow. Server capturing agent **208** can also include in the control flow a flow identifier, an IP address, a timestamp, metadata, a process ID, and any other information. In addition, capturing agent **208** can append the process and user information (i.e., which process and/or user is associated with a particular flow) to the control flow. The additional information as identified above can be applied to the control flow as labels. Alternatively, the additional information can be included as part of a header, a trailer, or a payload.

Server capturing agent **208** can also report multiple flows as a set of flows. When reporting a set of flows, server capturing agent **208** can include a flow identifier for the set of flows and/or a flow identifier for each flow in the set of flows. Server capturing agent **208** can also include one or more timestamps and other information as previously explained.

Any communications captured or reported by capturing agents **202** and **206** can flow through server 106_A. Thus, server capturing agent **208** can observe or capture any flows or packets reported by capturing agents **202** and **206**. In other words, network data observed by capturing agents **202** and **206** inside VMs **110** and hypervisor 108_A can be a subset of the data observed by server capturing agent **208** on server 106_A. Accordingly, server capturing agent **208** can report any packets or flows reported by capturing agents **202** and **206** and any control flows generated by capturing agents **202** and **206**. For example, capturing agent 202_A on VM 1 (110_A) captures flow 1 (F1) and reports F1 to collector **118** as illustrated on FIG. **1**. Capturing agent **206** on hypervisor 108_A can also observe and capture F1, as F1 would traverse hypervisor 108_A when being sent or received by VM 1 (110_A). In addition, capturing agent **206** on server 106_A can also see and capture F1, as F1 would traverse server 106_A when being sent or received by VM 1 (110_A) and hypervisor 108_A. Accordingly, capturing agent **208** can also report F1 to collector **118**. Thus, collector **118** can receive a report (i.e., control flow) regarding F1 from capturing agent 202_A on VM 1 (110_A), capturing agent **206** on hypervisor 108_A, and capturing agent **208** on server 106_A.

When reporting F1, server capturing agent **208** can report F1 as a message or report that is separate from any messages or reports of F1 transmitted by capturing agent 202_A on VM 1 (110_A) or capturing agent **206** on hypervisor 108_A. However, server capturing agent **208** can also, or otherwise, report F1 as a message or report that includes or appends the messages or reports or metadata of F1 transmitted by capturing agent 202_A on VM 1 (110_A) and capturing agent **206** on hypervisor 108_A. In other words, server capturing agent **208** can report F1 as a separate message or report from the messages or reports of F1 from capturing agent 202_A and capturing agent **206**, and/or a same message or report that includes a report of F1 by capturing agent 202_A, capturing agent **206**, and capturing agent **208**. In this way, capturing agents **202** at VMs **110** can report packets or flows received or sent by VMs **110**, capturing agent **206** at hypervisor 108_A can report packets or flows received or sent by hypervisor 108_A, including any flows or packets received or sent by VMs **110** and reported by capturing agents **202**, and capturing agent **208** at server 106_A can report packets or flows received or sent by server 106_A, including any flows or packets received or sent by VMs **110** and reported by capturing agents **202**, and any flows or packets received or sent by hypervisor 108_A and reported by capturing agent **206**.

Server capturing agent **208** can run as a process, kernel module, or kernel driver on the host operating system or a hardware component of server 106_A. Server capturing agent **208** can thus monitor any traffic sent and received by server 106_A, any processes associated with server 106_A, etc.

In addition to network data, capturing agents **202**, **206**, and **208** can capture additional information about the system or environment in which they reside. For example, capturing agents **202**, **206**, and **208** can capture data or metadata of active or previously active processes of their respective system or environment, operating system user identifiers, metadata of files on their respective system or environment, timestamps, network addressing information, flow identifiers, capturing agent identifiers, etc. Capturing agents **202**, **206**, and **208**

Moreover, capturing agents **202**, **206**, **208** are not specific to any operating system environment, hypervisor environment, network environment, or hardware environment. Thus, capturing agents **202**, **206**, and **208** can operate in any environment.

As previously explained, capturing agents **202**, **206**, and **208** can send information about the network traffic they observe. This information can be sent to one or more remote devices, such as one or more servers, collectors, engines, etc. Each capturing agent can be configured to send respective information using a network address, such as an IP address, and any other communication details, such as port number, to one or more destination addresses or locations. Capturing agents **202**, **206**, and **208** can send metadata about one or more flows, packets, communications, processes, events, etc.

Capturing agents **202**, **206**, and **208** can periodically report information about each flow or packet they observe. The information reported can contain a list of flows or packets that were active during a period of time (e.g., between the current time and the time at which the last information was reported). The communication channel between the capturing agent and the destination can create a flow in every interval. For example, the communication channel between capturing agent **208** and collector **118** can create a control flow. Thus, the information reported by a capturing agent can also contain information about this control flow. For example, the information reported by capturing agent **208** to collector **118** can include a list of flows or packets that were active at hypervisor 108_A during a period of time, as well as information about the communication channel between capturing agent **206** and collector **118** used to report the information by capturing agent **206**.

FIG. **2**B illustrates a schematic diagram of example capturing agent deployment **220** in an example network device. The network device is described as leaf router 104_A, as illustrated in FIG. **1**. However, this is for explanation purposes. The network device can be any other network device, such as any other switch, router, etc.

In this example, leaf router **104**$_A$ can include network resources **222**, such as memory, storage, communication, processing, input, output, and other types of resources. Leaf router **104**$_A$ can also include operating system environment **224**. The operating system environment **224** can include any operating system, such as a network operating system, embedded operating system, etc. Operating system environment **224** can include processes, functions, and applications for performing networking, routing, switching, forwarding, policy implementation, messaging, monitoring, and other types of operations.

Leaf router **104**$_A$ can also include capturing agent **226**. Capturing agent **226** can be an agent or sensor configured to capture network data, such as flows or packets, sent received, or processed by leaf router **104**$_A$. Capturing agent **226** can also be configured to capture other information, such as processes, statistics, users, alerts, status information, device information, etc. Moreover, capturing agent **226** can be configured to report captured data to a remote device or network, such as collector **118** shown in FIG. **1**, for example. Capturing agent **226** can report information using one or more network addresses associated with leaf router **104**$_A$ or collector **118**. For example, capturing agent **226** can be configured to report information using an IP assigned to an active communications interface on leaf router **104**$_A$.

Leaf router **104**$_A$ can be configured to route traffic to and from other devices or networks, such as server **106**$_A$. Accordingly, capturing agent **226** can also report data reported by other capturing agents on other devices. For example, leaf router **104**$_A$ can be configured to route traffic sent and received by server **106**$_A$ to other devices. Thus, data reported from capturing agents deployed on server **106**$_A$, such as VM and hypervisor capturing agents on server **106**$_A$, would also be observed by capturing agent **226** and can thus be reported by capturing agent **226** as data observed at leaf router **104**$_A$. Such report can be a control flow generated by capturing agent **226**. Data reported by the VM and hypervisor capturing agents on server **106**$_A$ can therefore be a subset of the data reported by capturing agent **226**.

Capturing agent **226** can run as a process or component (e.g., firmware, module, hardware device, etc.) in leaf router **104**$_A$. Moreover, capturing agent **226** can be installed on leaf router **104**$_A$ as a software or firmware agent. In some configurations, leaf router **104**$_A$ itself can act as capturing agent **226**. Moreover, capturing agent **226** can run within operating system **224** and/or separate from operating system **224**.

FIG. **2**C illustrates a schematic diagram of example reporting system **240** in an example capturing agent topology. The capturing agent topology includes capturing agents along a path from a virtualized environment (e.g., VM and hypervisor) to the fabric **112**.

Leaf router **104**$_A$ can route packets or traffic **242** between fabric **112** and server **106**$_A$, hypervisor **108**$_A$, and VM **110**$_A$. Packets or traffic **242** between VM **110**$_A$ and leaf router **104**$_A$ can flow through hypervisor **108**$_A$ and server **106**$_A$. Packets or traffic **242** between hypervisor **108**$_A$ and leaf router **104**$_A$ can flow through server **106**$_A$. Finally, packets or traffic **242** between server **106**$_A$ and leaf router **104**$_A$ can flow directly to leaf router **104**$_A$. However, in some cases, packets or traffic **242** between server **106**$_A$ and leaf router **104**$_A$ can flow through one or more intervening devices or networks, such as a switch or a firewall.

Moreover, VM capturing agent **202**$_A$ at VM **110**$_A$, hypervisor capturing agent **206**$_A$ at hypervisor **108**$_A$, network device capturing agent **226** at leaf router **104**$_A$, and any server capturing agent at server **106**$_A$ (e.g., capturing agent running on host environment of server **106**$_A$) can send reports **244** (also referred to as control flows) to collector **118** based on the packets or traffic **242** captured at each respective capturing agent. Reports **244** from VM capturing agent **202**$_A$ to collector **118** can flow through VM **110**$_A$, hypervisor **108**$_A$, server **106**$_A$, and leaf router **104**$_A$. Reports **244** from hypervisor capturing agent **206**$_A$ to collector **118** can flow through hypervisor **108**$_A$, server **106**$_A$, and leaf router **104**$_A$. Reports **244** from any other server capturing agent at server **106**$_A$ to collector **118** can flow through server **106**$_A$ and leaf router **104**$_A$. Finally, reports **244** from network device capturing agent **226** to collector **118** can flow through leaf router **104**$_A$. Although reports **244** are depicted as being routed separately from traffic **242** in FIG. **2**C, one of ordinary skill in the art will understand that reports **244** and traffic **242** can be transmitted through the same communication channel(s).

Reports **244** can include any portion of packets or traffic **242** captured at the respective capturing agents. Reports **244** can also include other information, such as timestamps, process information, capturing agent identifiers, flow identifiers, flow statistics, notifications, logs, user information, system information, etc. Some or all of this information can be appended to reports **244** as one or more labels, metadata, or as part of the packet(s)' header, trailer, or payload. For example, if a user opens a browser on VM **110**$_A$ and navigates to examplewebsite.com, VM capturing agent **202**$_A$ of VM **110**$_A$ can determine which user (i.e., operating system user) of VM **110**$_A$ (e.g., username "johndoe85") and which process being executed on the operating system of VM **110**$_A$ (e.g., "chrome.exe") were responsible for the particular network flow to and from examplewebsite.com. Once such information is determined, the information can be included in report **244** as labels for example, and report **244** can be transmitted from VM capturing agent **202**$_A$ to collector **118**. Such additional information can help system **240** to gain insight into flow information at the process and user level, for instance. This information can be used for security, optimization, and determining structures and dependencies within system **240**.

In some examples, the reports **244** can include various statistics and/or usage information reported by the respective capturing agents. For example, the reports **244** can indicate an amount of traffic captured by the respective capturing agent, which can include the amount of traffic sent, received, and generated by the capturing agent's host; a type of traffic captured, such as video, audio, Web (e.g., HTTP or HTTPS), database queries, application traffic, etc.; a source and/or destination of the traffic, such as a destination server or application, a source network or device, a source or destination address or name (e.g., IP address, DNS name, FQDN, packet label, MAC address, VLAN, VNID, VxLAN, source or destination domain, etc.); a source and/or destination port (e.g., port 25, port 80, port 443, port 8080, port 22); a traffic protocol; traffic metadata; etc. The reports **244** can also include indications of traffic or usage patterns and information, such as frequency of communications, intervals, type of requests, type of responses, triggering processes or events (e.g., causality), resource usage, etc.

Each of the capturing agents **202**$_A$, **206**$_A$, **226** can include a respective unique capturing agent identifier on each of reports **244** it sends to collector **118**, to allow collector **118** to determine which capturing agent sent the report. Capturing agent identifiers in reports **244** can also be used to determine which capturing agents reported what flows. This information can then be used to determine capturing agent placement and topology, as further described below, as well as mapping individual flows to processes and users. Such additional insights gained can be useful for analyzing the data in reports **244**, as well as troubleshooting, security, visualization, configuration, planning, and management, and so forth.

As previously noted, the topology of the capturing agents can be ascertained from the reports **244**. To illustrate, a packet received by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ from fabric **112** can be captured and reported by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$. Since the packet received by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ will also flow through leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$ and hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, it can also be captured and reported by hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$ and network device capturing agent **226**. Thus, for a packet received by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ from fabric **112**, collector **118** can receive a report of the packet from VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$, hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$, and network device capturing agent **226**.

Similarly, a packet sent by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ to fabric **112** can be captured and reported by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$. Since the packet sent by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ will also flow through leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$ and hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, it can also be captured and reported by hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$ and network device capturing agent **226**. Thus, for a packet sent by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ to fabric **112**, collector **118** can receive a report of the packet from VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$, hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$, and network device capturing agent **226**.

On the other hand, a packet originating at, or destined to, hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, can be captured and reported by hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$ and network device capturing agent **226**, but not VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$, as such packet may not flow through VM $\mathbf{110}_A$. Moreover, a packet originating at, or destined to, leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$, will be captured and reported by network device capturing agent **226**, but not VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$, hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$, or any other capturing agent on server $\mathbf{106}_A$, as such packet may not flow through VM $\mathbf{110}_A$, hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, or server $\mathbf{106}_A$.

Information ascertained or inferred about the topology of the capturing agents can also be used with the reports **244** to detect problems. For example, the inferred topology of the capturing agents can be used with the current and/or historical statistics included in the reports **244** to infer or detect various conditions. To illustrate, traffic to and from fabric **112** captured by VM capturing agent **202** should also be captured by hypervisor capturing agent **206** and network device capturing agent **226**. Thus, if VM capturing agent **202** reports 200 packets to or from fabric **112** during a period of time and network device capturing agent **226** only reports 20 packets to or from fabric **112** during that same period of time, then one can infer from this discrepancy that VM capturing agent **202** has reported and/or captured an abnormal or unexpected number of packets during that period of time. This abnormal activity can be determined to indicate a faulty state of the VM capturing agent **202**, such as an error, a bug, malware, a virus, or a compromised condition.

Other statistics and usage details determined from reports **244** can also be considered for determining problems or faults with capturing agents and/or hosts. For example, if hypervisor capturing agent **206** has typically reported in the past an average of 10K server hits (e.g., Web, email, database, etc.) every 7 days, and reports **244** indicate a spike of 50K server hits over the last 2 days, then one can infer that this abnormal levels of activity indicate a problem with the hypervisor capturing agent **206** and/or its host (i.e., hypervisor **108** or server **106**). The abnormal levels of activity can be a result of malware or a virus affecting the hypervisor capturing agent **206**.

In another example, if the reports **244** indicate that the VM capturing agent **202** has been generating unexpected, improper, or excessive traffic, such as sending packets or commands to a new or different device other than collector **118**—or other than any other system with which VM capturing agent **202** is expected or configured to communicate with—or sending the wrong types of packets (e.g., other than reports **244**) or sending traffic at unexpected times or events (e.g., without being triggered by a predefined setting or event such as the capturing of a packet processed by the host), then one can assume that VM capturing agent **202** has been compromised or is being manipulated by an unauthorized user or device.

Reports **244** can be transmitted to collector **118** periodically as new packets or traffic **242** are captured by a capturing agent, or otherwise based on a schedule, interval, or event, for example. Further, each capturing agent can send a single report or multiple reports to collector **118**. For example, each of the capturing agents can be configured to send a report to collector **118** for every flow, packet, message, communication, or network data received, transmitted, and/or generated by its respective host (e.g., VM $\mathbf{110}_A$, hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, server $\mathbf{106}_A$, and leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$). As such, collector **118** can receive a report of a same packet from multiple capturing agents. In other examples, one or more capturing agents can be configured to send a report to collector **118** for one or more flows, packets, messages, communications, network data, or subset(s) thereof, received, transmitted, and/or generated by the respective host during a period of time or interval.

FIG. **3** illustrates a schematic diagram of an example configuration **300** for collecting capturing agent reports (i.e., control flows). In configuration **300**, traffic between fabric **112** and VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ is configured to flow through hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$. Moreover, traffic between fabric **112** and hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ is configured to flow through leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$.

VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ can be configured to report to collector **118** traffic sent, received, or processed by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$. Hypervisor capturing agent **210** can be configured to report to collector **118** traffic sent, received, or processed by hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$. Finally, network device capturing agent **226** can be configured to report to collector **118** traffic sent, received, or processed by leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$.

Collector **118** can thus receive flows **302** from VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$, flows **304** from hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$, and flows **306** from network device capturing agent **226**. Flows **302**, **304**, and **306** can include control flows. Flows **302** can include flows captured by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ at VM $\mathbf{110}_A$.

Flows **304** can include flows captured by hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$ at hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$. Flows captured by hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$ can also include flows **302** captured by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$, as traffic sent and received by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ will be received and observed by hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ and captured by hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$.

Flows **306** can include flows captured by network device capturing agent **226** at leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$. Flows captured by network device capturing agent **226** can also include flows **302** captured by VM capturing agent $\mathbf{202}_A$ and flows **304** captured by hypervisor capturing agent $\mathbf{206}_A$, as traffic sent and received by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ and hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ is routed through leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$ and can thus be captured by network device capturing agent **226**.

Collector **118** can collect flows **302**, **304**, and **306**, and store the reported data. Collector **118** can also forward some or all of flows **302**, **304**, and **306**, and/or any respective portion thereof, to engine **120**. Engine **120** can process the information, including any information about the capturing agents (e.g., agent placement, agent environment, etc.) and/or the captured traffic (e.g., statistics), received from collector **118** to identify patterns, conditions, network or device characteristics; log statistics or history details; aggregate and/or process the data; generate reports, timelines, alerts, graphical user interfaces; detect errors, events, inconsistencies; troubleshoot networks or devices; configure networks or devices; deploy services or devices; reconfigure services, applications, devices, or networks; etc.

Collector **118** and/or engine **120** can map individual flows that traverse VM $\mathbf{110}_A$, hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, and/or leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$ to the specific capturing agents at VM $\mathbf{110}_A$, hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, and/or leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$. For example, collector **118** or engine **120** can determine that a particular flow that originated from VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ and destined for fabric **112** was sent by VM $\mathbf{110}_A$ and such flow was reported by VM capturing agent **202**. It may be determined that the same flow was received by a process named Z on hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ and forwarded to a process named W on leaf router $\mathbf{104}_A$ and also reported by hypervisor capturing agent **206**.

While engine **120** is illustrated as a separate entity, other configurations are also contemplated herein. For example, engine **120** can be part of collector **118** and/or a separate entity. Indeed, engine **120** can include one or more devices, applications, modules, databases, processing components, elements, etc. Moreover, collector **118** can represent one or more collectors. For example, in some configurations, collector **118** can include multiple collection systems or entities, which can reside in one or more networks.

Having disclosed some basic system components and concepts, the disclosure now turns to the exemplary method embodiment shown in FIG. **4**. For the sake of clarity, the method is described in terms of collector **118** and capturing agents **116**, as shown in FIG. **1**, configured to practice the various steps in the method. However, the example methods can be practiced by any software or hardware components, devices, etc. heretofore disclosed. The steps outlined herein are exemplary and can be implemented in any combination thereof in any order, including combinations that exclude, add, or modify certain steps.

At step **400**, collector **118** can receive, from a capturing agent **116** deployed in virtualization layer $\mathbf{108}_A$ of server $\mathbf{106}_A$, one or more data reports (e.g., reports **244**) generated based on traffic captured by the capturing agent **116** at the virtualization layer $\mathbf{108}_A$ of server $\mathbf{106}_A$. At step **402**, the collector **118** can receive, from a capturing agent **116** deployed in a hardware layer of leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$, one or more data reports generated based on traffic captured by the capturing agent **116** at the hardware layer of the leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$. The collector **118** can also receive one or more reports from other capturing agents **116**, such as the capturing agents **116** at any of VMs **110** and/or server **106**.

The data reports can include traffic and/or usage information associated with the capturing agent's host (e.g., leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$, server $\mathbf{106}_A$). The data reports can also include information identifying the capturing agent **116** that generated and sent the data reports and/or the server $\mathbf{106}_A$ hosting the capturing agent **116**. Moreover, the data reports can be based on individual packets or multiple packets. In some examples, the data reports can be based on activity (e.g., traffic) captured over a period of time, during an event, during an interval, etc.

Based on the one or more data reports from the capturing agents **116** from the hypervisor layer $\mathbf{108}_A$ and leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$, at step **404** the collector **118** can determine a first set of characteristics of the traffic captured by the capturing agent **116** at the hypervisor layer $\mathbf{108}_A$ and a second set of characteristics of the traffic captured by the capturing agent **116** at the leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$. The first and second sets of characteristics can include statistics and/or usage information, such as an amount of activity or packets sent or received, an amount of requests received, an amount of responses sent, a type of packets sent or received, an activity pattern (e.g., fluctuations of activity, frequency of communications, changes in bandwidth used, changes in source or target devices, etc.), an identity of a source or destination of one or more packets or communications, a source address, a destination address, a protocol of communications, memory or CPU usage, an identity of one or more processes associated with the captured activity, a recorded event, etc.

If the collector **118** receives reports from other capturing agents, the collector **118** can also determine a set of characteristics of the traffic captured by those capturing agents. The set of characteristics can similarly include statistics and/or usage information as previously described. Moreover, the collector **118** can determine the first and second set of characteristics, as well as another other sets of characteristics, for different periods of time. For example, the collector **118** can determine the first and set of characteristics of the traffic and/or usage during a current or recent period of time, as well as characteristics for a previous or earlier period of time (e.g., historical characteristics).

At step **406**, the collector **118** can compare the first set of characteristics of the traffic captured by the capturing agent **116** at the hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ with the second set of characteristics captured by the capturing agent **116** at the leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$ to determine a difference in traffic characteristics between the capturing agent **116** at the hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ and the capturing agent **116** at the leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$. The collector **118** can also compare the first and second sets of characteristics with historical data, including previous or earlier sets of characteristics determined from previous reports received from the respective capturing agents **116**.

Based on the difference in traffic characteristics, the collector **118** can determine that the capturing agent **116** at the hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ and/or the capturing agent **116** at the leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$ is in a faulty state. The collector **118** can also determine that other capturing agents (e.g., VM capturing agent, server capturing agent, etc.) are in the faulty state based on difference in other respective traffic characteristics. The faulty state can be a compromised state (e.g., based on malware, virus, faulty code, a bug, access by an unauthorized user or device, etc.). The collector **118** can also determine that a capturing agent is sending or reporting errors, incorrect data, extra data, etc., or sending out extra, unexpected, unauthorized, or excessive traffic on the network.

In some examples, the collector **118** can determine that one or more capturing agents **116** are in a faulty state based on a difference in the amount of traffic reported by the capturing agents **116** at the hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ and the leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$. For example, if the capturing agent **116** at the hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ reports 10K hits to a database at server $\mathbf{106}_A$ or 10K packets received by hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$, while the capturing agent **116** at the leaf switch $\mathbf{104}_A$ only reports 1K database packets or requests, the collector **118** can determine that this discrepancy indicates that the capturing agent **116** at the hypervisor $\mathbf{108}_A$ is reporting extra, unauthorized, or fictitious packets, or the capturing agent **116** at leaf $\mathbf{104}_A$ is under-reporting. This determination may be partly based on knowledge or inferences regarding the topology of the capturing agents **116**.

The collector **118** can also detect the faulty state based on differences in traffic or usage over a period of time, or based on differences in traffic or usage between current traffic or activity and previous traffic or activity. This can be ascertained by comparing current data, such as current characteristics from current reports, with historical data, such as previous characteristics from previous reports.

Differences indicative of faulty state can be based on a topology of capturing agents, as previously noted. The topology of capturing agents can be used to infer how many packets should be expected to be reported by one capturing agent relative to another agent. For example, a capturing agent residing on a leaf switch connecting a server to the network fabric may be expected to see more traffic than capturing agents on the server or on a hypervisor or VM on the server. Moreover, traffic reported by a VM is expected to be also reported by the hypervisor and server hosting the VM, as well as the leaf switch connecting the VM to the fabric. Accordingly, discrepancies in which capturing agents report specific traffic and the relative amounts of traffic reported by the different capturing agents can indicate that one or more capturing agents is in a faulty state.

The difference to trigger a determination of a faulty state can be a threshold difference, such as an amount of packets, communications or activity (e.g., a difference in 50, 100, 1K, or 10K packets received). The threshold can be determined based on a size of the network, average traffic or activity, historical data, period of time, etc. For example, if the difference reflects a period of 1 week, the threshold can be increased as opposed to a difference reflected for a period of 1 day. If the average traffic statistics show differences of 10 to 100 packets to be within a normal range, the threshold can be set to above 100 packets, for example. Moreover, if the average amount of traffic captured by the capturing agents ranges in the thousands, the threshold may be lower than if the average amount of traffic normally handled is in the millions. Further, if historical data shows that similar fluctuations are normal, then the threshold can be increased to exceed what has been considered normal fluctuations based on historical data.

The collector **118** can perform verification tests to confirm whether a capturing agent **116** is in a faulty state. For example, the collector **118** can send one or more probes to the capturing agent and analyze the response(s) if any. The collector **118** can generate notifications or alerts for users or devices to test or confirm whether the capturing agents are in the faulty state. Moreover, the collector **118** can collect additional reports and perform an additional comparison and/or analysis to determine whether the faulty state continues or was perhaps an anomaly. The collector **118** can also average out statistics and perform an additional verification, test, or comparison to check the status of the capturing agents **116**.

The collector **118** can also infer whether other capturing agents are also in a faulty state. For example, if collector **118** determines that a capturing agent at a hypervisor layer is infected with malware, it can then infer that the capturing agent at the hardware layer or VM layer of the same host/system is also infected.

In response to determining that a capturing agent is in the faulty state, the collector **118** can mark the traffic or reports reported by such capturing agent as being faulty or compromised. The collector **118** can also drop or block data reported from capturing agents deemed to be compromised.

The collector **118** can also reduce the amount of data or reports collected from a capturing agent deemed to be compromised. Moreover, the collector **118** can summarize or aggregate data reported from capturing agents, and the capturing agents can be instructed to report a reduced amount of data (e.g., a subset of the data) and/or increase the time periods or intervals for reporting data. The capturing agents can thus reduce the amount of data reported in order to reduce or limit the amount of bandwidth used by a capturing agent that is potentially compromised.

FIG. **5** illustrates a listing **500** of example fields on a capturing agent report. The listing **500** can include one or more fields, such as:

Flow identifier (e.g., unique identifier associated with the flow).

Capturing agent identifier (e.g., data uniquely identifying reporting capturing agent).

Timestamp (e.g., time of event, report, etc.).

Interval (e.g., time between current report and previous report, interval between flows or packets, interval between events, etc.).

Duration (e.g., duration of event, duration of communication, duration of flow, duration of report, etc.).

Flow direction (e.g., egress flow, ingress flow, etc.).

Application identifier (e.g., identifier of application associated with flow, process, event, or data).

Port (e.g., source port, destination port, layer 4 port, etc.).

Destination address (e.g., interface address associated with destination, IP address, domain name, network address, hardware address, virtual address, physical address, etc.).

Source address (e.g., interface address associated with source, IP address, domain name, network address, hardware address, virtual address, physical address, etc.).

Interface (e.g., interface address, interface information, etc.).

Protocol (e.g., layer 4 protocol, layer 3 protocol, etc.).

Event (e.g., description of event, event identifier, etc.).

Flag (e.g., layer 3 flag, flag options, etc.).

Tag (e.g., virtual local area network tag, etc.).

Process (e.g., process identifier, etc.).

User (e.g., OS username, etc.).

Bytes (e.g., flow size, packet size, transmission size, etc.).

Sensor Type (e.g., the type of virtualized environment hosting the capturing agent, such as hypervisor or VM; the type of virtual network device, such as VNIC, LINUX bridge, OVS, software switch, etc.).

The listing **500** includes a non-limiting example of fields in a report. Other fields and data items are also contemplated herein, such as handshake information, system information, network address associated with capturing agent or host, operating system environment information, network data or statistics, process statistics, system statistics, etc. The order in which these fields are illustrated is also exemplary and can be rearranged in any other way. One or more of these fields can be part of a header, a trailer, or a payload of in one or more packets. Moreover, one or more of these fields can be applied to the one or more packets as labels. Each of the fields can include data, metadata, and/or any other information relevant to the fields.

The disclosure now turns to the example network device and system illustrated in FIGS. **6** and **7**A-B.

FIG. **6** illustrates an example network device **610** according to some embodiments. Network device **610** includes a master central processing unit (CPU) **662**, interfaces **668**, and a bus **615** (e.g., a PCI bus). When acting under the control of appropriate software or firmware, the CPU **662** is responsible for executing packet management, error detection, and/or routing functions. The CPU **662** preferably accomplishes all these functions under the control of software including an operating system and any appropriate applications software. CPU **662** may include one or more processors **663** such as a processor from the Motorola family of microprocessors or the MIPS family of microprocessors. In an alternative embodiment, processor **663** is specially designed hardware for controlling the operations of router **610**. In a specific embodiment, a memory **661** (such as non-volatile RAM and/or ROM) also forms part of CPU **662**. However, there are many different ways in which memory could be coupled to the system.

The interfaces **668** are typically provided as interface cards (sometimes referred to as "line cards"). Generally, they control the sending and receiving of data packets over the network and sometimes support other peripherals used with the router **610**. Among the interfaces that may be provided are Ethernet interfaces, frame relay interfaces, cable interfaces, DSL interfaces, token ring interfaces, and the like. In addition, various very high-speed interfaces may be provided such as fast token ring interfaces, wireless interfaces, Ethernet interfaces, Gigabit Ethernet interfaces, ATM interfaces, HSSI interfaces, POS interfaces, FDDI interfaces and the like. Generally, these interfaces may include ports appropriate for communication with the appropriate media. In some cases, they may also include an independent processor and, in some instances, volatile RAM. The independent processors may control such communications intensive tasks as packet switching, media control and management. By providing separate processors for the communications intensive tasks, these interfaces allow the master microprocessor **662** to efficiently perform routing computations, network diagnostics, security functions, etc.

Although the system shown in FIG. **6** is one specific network device of the present invention, it is by no means the only network device architecture on which the present invention can be implemented. For example, an architecture having a single processor that handles communications as well as routing computations, etc. is often used. Further, other types of interfaces and media could also be used with the router.

Regardless of the network device's configuration, it may employ one or more memories or memory modules (including memory **661**) configured to store program instructions for the general-purpose network operations and mechanisms for roaming, route optimization and routing functions described herein. The program instructions may control the operation of an operating system and/or one or more applications, for example. The memory or memories may also be configured to store tables such as mobility binding, registration, and association tables, etc.

FIG. **7**A and FIG. **7**B illustrate example system embodiments. The more appropriate embodiment will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art when practicing the present technology. Persons of ordinary skill in the art will also readily appreciate that other system embodiments are possible.

FIG. **7**A illustrates a conventional system bus computing system architecture **700** wherein the components of the system are in electrical communication with each other using a bus **705**. Exemplary system **700** includes a processing unit (CPU or processor) **710** and a system bus **705** that couples various system components including the system memory **715**, such as read only memory (ROM) **720** and random access memory (RAM) **725**, to the processor **710**. The system **700** can include a cache of high-speed memory connected directly with, in close proximity to, or integrated as part of the processor **710**. The system **700** can copy data from the memory **715** and/or the storage device **730** to the cache **712** for quick access by the processor **710**. In this way, the cache can provide a performance boost that avoids processor **710** delays while waiting for data. These and other modules can control or be configured to control the processor **710** to perform various actions. Other system memory **715** may be available for use as well. The memory **715** can include multiple different types of memory with different performance characteristics. The processor **710** can include any general purpose processor and a hardware module or software module, such as module 1 **732**, module 2 **734**, and module 3 **736** stored in storage device **730**, configured to control the processor **710** as well as a special-purpose processor where software instructions are incorporated into the actual processor design. The processor **710** may essentially be a completely self-contained computing system, containing multiple cores or processors, a bus, memory controller, cache, etc. A multi-core processor may be symmetric or asymmetric.

To enable user interaction with the computing device **700**, an input device **745** can represent any number of input mechanisms, such as a microphone for speech, a touch-sensitive screen for gesture or graphical input, keyboard, mouse, motion input, speech and so forth. An output device **735** can also be one or more of a number of output mechanisms known to those of skill in the art. In some instances, multimodal systems can enable a user to provide multiple types of input to communicate with the computing device **700**. The communications interface **740** can generally govern and manage the user input and system output. There is no restriction on operating on any particular hardware arrangement and therefore the basic features here may easily be substituted for improved hardware or firmware arrangements as they are developed.

Storage device **730** is a non-volatile memory and can be a hard disk or other types of computer readable media which can store data that are accessible by a computer, such as magnetic cassettes, flash memory cards, solid state memory devices, digital versatile disks, cartridges, random access memories (RAMs) **725**, read only memory (ROM) **720**, and hybrids thereof.

The storage device **730** can include software modules **732**, **734**, **736** for controlling the processor **710**. Other hardware or software modules are contemplated. The storage device **730** can be connected to the system bus **705**. In one aspect, a hardware module that performs a particular function can include the software component stored in a computer-readable medium in connection with the necessary hardware components, such as the processor **710**, bus **705**, display **735**, and so forth, to carry out the function.

FIG. **7**B illustrates an example computer system **750** having a chipset architecture that can be used in executing the described method and generating and displaying a graphical user interface (GUI). Computer system **750** is an example of computer hardware, software, and firmware that can be used to implement the disclosed technology. System **750** can include a processor **755**, representative of any number of physically and/or logically distinct resources capable of executing software, firmware, and hardware configured to perform identified computations. Processor **755** can communicate with a chipset **760** that can control input to and output from processor **755**. In this example, chipset **760** outputs information to output device **765**, such as a display, and can read and write information to storage device **770**, which can include magnetic media, and solid state media, for example. Chipset **760** can also read data from and write data to RAM **775**. A bridge **780** for interfacing with a variety of user interface components **785** can be provided for interfacing with chipset **760**. Such user interface components **785** can include a keyboard, a microphone, touch detection and processing circuitry, a pointing device, such as a mouse, and so on. In general, inputs to system **750** can come from any of a variety of sources, machine generated and/or human generated.

Chipset **760** can also interface with one or more communication interfaces **790** that can have different physical interfaces. Such communication interfaces can include interfaces for wired and wireless local area networks, for broadband wireless networks, as well as personal area networks. Some applications of the methods for generating, displaying, and using the GUI disclosed herein can include receiving ordered datasets over the physical interface or be generated by the machine itself by processor **755** analyzing data stored in storage **770** or **775**. Further, the machine can receive inputs from a user via user interface components **785** and execute appropriate functions, such as browsing functions by interpreting these inputs using processor **755**.

It can be appreciated that example systems **700** and **750** can have more than one processor **710** or be part of a group or cluster of computing devices networked together to provide greater processing capability.

For clarity of explanation, in some instances the present technology may be presented as including individual functional blocks including functional blocks comprising devices, device components, steps or routines in a method embodied in software, or combinations of hardware and software.

In some embodiments the computer-readable storage devices, mediums, and memories can include a cable or wireless signal containing a bit stream and the like. However, when mentioned, non-transitory computer-readable storage media expressly exclude media such as energy, carrier signals, electromagnetic waves, and signals per se.

Methods according to the above-described examples can be implemented using computer-executable instructions that are stored or otherwise available from computer readable media. Such instructions can comprise, for example, instructions and data which cause or otherwise configure a general purpose computer, special purpose computer, or special purpose processing device to perform a certain function or group of functions. Portions of computer resources used can be accessible over a network. The computer executable instructions may be, for example, binaries, intermediate format instructions such as assembly language, firmware, or source code. Examples of computer-readable media that may be used to store instructions, information used, and/or information created during methods according to described examples include magnetic or optical disks, flash memory, USB devices provided with non-volatile memory, networked storage devices, and so on.

Devices implementing methods according to these disclosures can comprise hardware, firmware and/or software, and can take any of a variety of form factors. Typical examples of such form factors include laptops, smart phones, small form factor personal computers, personal digital assistants, rackmount devices, standalone devices, and so on. Functionality described herein also can be embodied in peripherals or add-in cards. Such functionality can also be implemented on a circuit board among different chips or different processes executing in a single device, by way of further example.

The instructions, media for conveying such instructions, computing resources for executing them, and other structures for supporting such computing resources are means for providing the functions described in these disclosures.

Although a variety of examples and other information was used to explain aspects within the scope of the appended claims, no limitation of the claims should be implied based on particular features or arrangements in such examples, as one of ordinary skill would be able to use these examples to derive a wide variety of implementations. Further and although some subject matter may have been described in language specific to examples of structural features and/or method steps, it is to be understood that the subject matter defined in the appended claims is not necessarily limited to these described features or acts. For example, such functionality can be distributed differently or performed in components other than those identified herein. Rather, the described features and steps are disclosed as examples of components of systems and methods within the scope of the appended claims. Moreover, claim language reciting "at least one of" a set indicates that one member of the set or multiple members of the set satisfy the claim.

It should be understood that features or configurations herein with reference to one embodiment or example can be implemented in, or combined with, other embodiments or examples herein. That is, terms such as "embodiment", "variation", "aspect", "example", "configuration", "implementation", "case", and any other terms which may connote an embodiment, as used herein to describe specific features or configurations, are not intended to limit any of the associated features or configurations to a specific or separate embodiment or embodiments, and should not be interpreted to suggest that such features or configurations cannot be combined with features or configurations described with reference to other embodiments, variations, aspects, examples, configurations, implementations, cases, and so forth. In other words, features described herein with reference to a specific example (e.g., embodiment, variation, aspect, configuration, implementation, case, etc.) can be combined with features described with reference to another example. Precisely, one of ordinary skill in the art will readily recognize that the various embodiments or examples described herein, and their associated features, can be combined with each other.

A phrase such as an "aspect" does not imply that such aspect is essential to the subject technology or that such aspect applies to all configurations of the subject technology. A disclosure relating to an aspect may apply to all configurations, or one or more configurations. A phrase such as an aspect may refer to one or more aspects and vice versa. A phrase such as a "configuration" does not imply that such configuration is essential to the subject technology or that such configuration applies to all configurations of the subject technology. A disclosure relating to a configuration may apply to all configurations, or one or more configurations. A phrase such as a configuration may refer to one or more configurations and vice versa. The word "exemplary" is used herein to mean "serving as an example or illustration." Any aspect or design described herein as "exemplary" is not necessarily to be construed as preferred or advantageous over other aspects or designs.

Moreover, claim language reciting "at least one of" a set indicates that one member of the set or multiple members of the set satisfy the claim. For example, claim language reciting "at least one of A, B, and C" or "at least one of A, B, or C" means A alone, B alone, C alone, A and B together, A and C together, B and C together, or A, B and C together.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

receiving, from a plurality of capturing agents deployed in a plurality of devices, data generated based on traffic at the plurality of devices, the data being captured at a virtualization layer that includes a hypervisor, a first one of the plurality of devices including a leaf switch in a spine-leaf network fabric, and a second one of the plurality of devices includes a host of the hypervisor coupled with the spine-leaf network fabric via the leaf switch;

comparing characteristics of the data to determine a difference in the characteristics; and

based on the difference, determining a state of at least one of the plurality of capturing agents,

wherein,

the data is generated based on observed data, statistics, and/or metadata about one or more packets, flows, communications, processes, events, and/or activities at the plurality of devices.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein, the state includes unauthorized activity, and the characteristics includes amounts of traffic captured at the virtualization layer.

3. The method of claim **2**, wherein the determining the state includes:

determining an indication of a threshold discrepancy between a first amount of traffic captured at the host and a second amount of traffic captured at the leaf switch; and

determining the threshold discrepancy is at least partially a result of the unauthorized activity at the at least one of the first one of the plurality of devices or the second one of the plurality of devices.

4. The method of claim **3**, wherein the determining that the threshold discrepancy is at least partially the result of the unauthorized activity includes determining a faulty one of the plurality of capturing agents when the first amount of the traffic is greater than the second amount of the traffic by a threshold amount.

5. The method of claim **3**, wherein the first amount of the traffic includes a number of hits to a database residing at the hypervisor on the host.

6. The method of claim **1**, wherein the determining the state includes:

determining a first traffic pattern for traffic captured during a first period of time;

determining a second traffic pattern for traffic captured during the first period of time;

determining a third traffic pattern for traffic during a second period of time before the first period of time;

determining a fourth traffic pattern for traffic during the second period of time;

comparing the first traffic pattern with the third traffic pattern to identify a first traffic pattern delta between the first traffic pattern and the third traffic pattern;

comparing the second traffic pattern with the fourth traffic pattern to identify a second traffic pattern delta between the second traffic pattern and the fourth traffic pattern;

determining whether the first traffic pattern delta or the second traffic pattern delta exceed a delta threshold;

when the first traffic pattern delta exceeds the delta threshold, determining a first one of the plurality of capturing agents is in the state; and

when the second traffic pattern delta exceeds the delta threshold, determining a second one of the plurality of capturing agents is in the state.

7. The method of claim **6**, wherein:

the first traffic pattern delta comprises a first delta in at least one of:

a first amount of traffic captured during the first period of time and the second period of time; or

a first frequency of traffic captured during the first period of time and the second period of time; and

the second traffic pattern delta comprises a second delta in at least one of:

a second amount of traffic captured during the first period of time and the second period of time; or

a second frequency of traffic captured during the first period of time and the second period of time.

8. The method of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of capturing agents includes at least one of a process, a kernel module, or a software driver.

9. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

in response to the determining the state, marking traffic or packets.

10. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

in response to the determining the state:

aggregating or summarizing the data; or

reducing an amount of the data.

11. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

in response to the determining the state, increasing a time interval for receiving subsequent data from the plurality of capturing agents to reduce an amount of further data received during the state.

12. The method of claim **1**,

wherein,

the data is received via a collector device, and

the method further includes:

in response to the determining the state:

dropping, by the collector device, the data; or

preventing, by the collector device, access by other devices to the data.

13. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

determining that at least one other capturing agent is in the state based on a topology of an associated network and a placement in the associated network of at least one of the plurality of capturing agents.

14. A system comprising:

one or more processors; and

one or more computer-readable storage devices having stored therein instructions which, when executed by the one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform operations comprising:

receiving, from a plurality of capturing agents deployed in a plurality of devices, data generated based on traffic at the plurality of devices, the data being captured at a virtualization layer that includes a hypervisor, a first one of the plurality of devices including a leaf switch in a spine-leaf network fabric, and a second one of the plurality of devices includes a host of the hypervisor coupled with the spine-leaf network fabric via the leaf switch;

comparing characteristics of the data to determine a difference in the characteristics; and

based on the difference, determining a state of at least one of the plurality of capturing agents,

wherein,

the data is generated based on observed data, statistics, and/or metadata about one or more packets, flows, communications, processes, events, and/or activities at the plurality of devices.

15. The system of claim **14**,

wherein,

the characteristics includes amounts of traffic captured at the virtualization layer; and

the determining of the state includes:

determining an indication of a threshold discrepancy between a first amount of traffic captured at the host and a second amount of traffic captured at a leaf switch; and

determining that the threshold discrepancy is at least partially a result of unauthorized activity at at least one of the first one of the plurality of devices or the second one of the plurality of devices.

16. The system of claim **14**, wherein the determining the state includes:

determining a first traffic pattern for traffic captured during a first period of time and a second traffic pattern for traffic captured during the first period of time;

determining a third traffic pattern for traffic captured during a second period of time and a fourth traffic pattern for traffic captured during the second period of time;

comparing the first traffic pattern with the third traffic pattern and the second traffic pattern with the fourth traffic pattern to identify a first traffic pattern delta between the first traffic pattern and the third traffic pattern and a second traffic pattern delta between the second traffic pattern and the fourth traffic pattern;

when the first traffic pattern delta exceeds a delta threshold, determining that the second one of the plurality of devices is in the state; and

when the second traffic pattern delta exceeds the delta threshold, determining that the first one of the plurality of devices or the second one of the plurality of devices is in the state.

17. The system of claim **14**, wherein the operations include, in response to the determining the state:

flagging traffic or packets in the data;

dropping the data; or

preventing access by other devices to the data.

18. The system of claim **14**, wherein the operations include, in response to the determining the state:

increasing a time interval for receiving subsequent data to reduce an amount of data;

aggregating or summarizing subsequent data received; or

reducing an amount of the subsequent data retained after receipt.

19. A computer-readable storage device storing instructions which, when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform operations comprising:

receiving, from a plurality of capturing agents deployed in a plurality of devices, data generated based on traffic at the plurality of devices, the data being captured at a virtualization layer that includes a hypervisor, a first one of the plurality of devices including a leaf switch in a spine-leaf network fabric, and a second one of the plurality of devices includes a host of the hypervisor coupled with the spine-leaf network fabric via the leaf switch;

comparing characteristics of the data to determine a difference in the characteristics; and

based on the difference, determining a state of at least one of the plurality of capturing agents,

wherein,

the data is generated based on observed data, statistics, and/or metadata about one or more packets, flows, communications, processes, events, and/or activities at the plurality of devices.

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